

## **Title of Lesson Plan: Silk Road: Cartography and Trade in Ancient and Modern China**



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### **Lesson Overview:**

Students will explore the “Silk Road” trade networks by investigating a route, mapping the best path, and portraying a character who navigated the route.

### **Opening essential questions?**

How did the Silk Road routes represent an early version of worldwide integration and development?

How does China’s modern One Belt, One Road project use similar routes and methodologies as the earlier Silk Road project? How is this modern project different?

### **Lesson Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

Students will also apply skills from the Global Competence Matrix and will:

- Investigate the world beyond their immediate environment by identifying an issue, generating a question, and explaining its significance locally, regionally, and globally.
- Recognize their own and others’ perspectives by understanding the influences that impact those perspectives.
- Communicate their ideas effectively with diverse audiences by realizing how their ideas and delivery can be perceived.
- Translate their ideas and findings into appropriate actions to improve conditions and to create opportunities for personal and collaborative action.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> World Savvy, Global Competence Matrix, Council of Chief State School Officers’ EdSteps Project in partnership with the Asia Society Partnership for Global Learning, 2010

## Length of Project:

This lesson as designed to take place over 2-3 days (periods are either 45 min or 77 min) in 9<sup>th</sup> Grade World History.

## Grade Level:

High School (gr 9) World History, variation in International Relations 12<sup>th</sup> grade

## Historical Context:

- China was a key player in the networks that crossed from one continent to another. These routes withstood changing political upheavals and the rise and fall of dynasties in many nations. The “Silk Road” was a complex network of routes used by soldiers, pilgrims, merchants, traders, migrants, and guides. The caravans that travelled on these paths traded goods along the short routes with silk often being used as a form of currency. The diversity of goods that were traded on the Silk Road was matched by the diversity of religions that the travels encountered along the way. Buddhism, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all had their place along the network that also had a vast number of languages encountered.
- History of Silk Road<sup>2</sup>
- From the second century BC to the end of the fourteenth century AD, a great trade route originated from Chang'an (now Xi'an) in the east and ended at the Mediterranean in the west, linking China with the Roman Empire. Because silk was the major trade product which traveled on this road, it was named the Silk Road in 1877 by Ferdinand von Richthofen – a well-known German geographer. This ancient route not only circulated goods, but also exchanged the splendid cultures of China, India, Persia, Arabia, Greek and Rome.
- Silk Road in Different Dynasties
- This route was opened by Zhang Qian in the Western Han Dynasty and the routes were gradually formed throughout the Han Dynasty. This trade route spent its childhood and gradually grew up in this dynasty. With the establishment of the Tang Dynasty, which saw rapid development of economy and society, this famous trade route reached its most prosperous stage in history. During the



Big Wild Goose Pagoda

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.travelchinaguide.com/silk-road/history/>

reign of Yuan Dynasty, it experienced its last flourishing period.

- Silk Road in Western Han Dynasty (206 BC–24 AD)
- From 139 BC to 129 BC, Zhang Qian set out on his journey to the Western Regions twice, pioneering the world-famous route. Several successful wars against the Huns were commanded by Wei Qing and Huo Qubing (famous generals in Han Dynasty), which removed obstacles along this trade route. The Great Wall was also built in the west to protect the safety of the trade route. In 60 BC, Han Dynasty established the Protectorate of the Western Regions in Wulei (near now Luntai) to supervise this northwest area, which greatly enhanced the trade along this time-honored route.
- Silk Road in Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220)
- Ban Chao and Ban Yong conducted several expeditions to the Western Regions to suppress rebellions and re-established the Protectorate of the Western Regions, ensuring peace and trade along this important route.
- Silk Road in Tang Dynasty (618–907)
- With the establishment of the Tang Dynasty and great prosperity during this time, the road rose to its most flourishing period in history. Before the Anshi Rebellion (755–762) in the Tang Dynasty, this world-famous road experienced its "Golden Age" of development.
- Silk Road in the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368)
- Along with the growth of the Mongolian Empire and the establishment of the Yuan Dynasty, the route regained its vigor and became prosperous once again. It enjoyed the last glorious era during this period.



A Piece of Silk

In 1271, the great Mongolian ruler Kublai Khan established a powerful Mongol Empire – Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) at Dadu (the present Beijing). The territory of the giant empire was the largest one in Chinese history, which stretched as far as Mongolia and Siberia in the north, South China Sea in the south, Tibet and Yunnan in the Southwest, Stanovoi Range (Outer Khingan) and Okhotsk in northeast, Xinjiang and Central Asia in the northwest. Even West Asia and Russia were under the control of this empire.

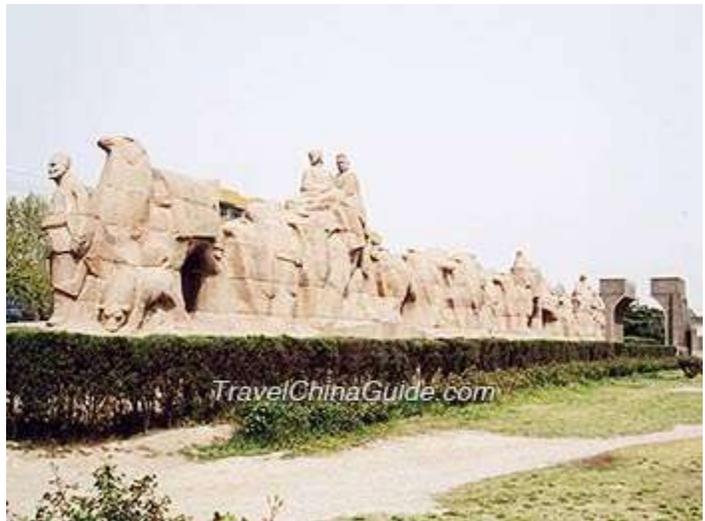
## Silk Road Curriculum Project 2018-2019

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The Mongol Empire destroyed a great number of toll-gates and corruption of the Silk Road; therefore passing through the historic trade route became more convenient, easier and safer than ever before. The Mongolian emperors welcomed the travelers of the West with open arms, and appointed some foreigners high positions, for example, Kublai Khan gave Marco Polo a hospitable welcome and appointed him a high post in his court. At that time, the Mongolian emperor issued a special VIP passport known as "Golden Tablet" which entitled holders to receive food, horses and guides throughout the Khan's dominion. The holders were able to travel freely and carried out trade between East and the West directly in the realm of the Mongol Empire.

Although maritime transport had an influence on the route, many westerners, Chinese envoys and caravans traveled along this ancient trade route.

However, the historically important route could not contend with expansion in the field of navigation which assisted its demise.



Xi'an Silk Road Sculptures

## Materials:

- PowerPoint to an introductory mini-lecture introduction (teacher will decide which slides to show for the introduction).
- Articles for introduction to the issue (addressed in Text section)
- Video of the TED Ed: The Silk Road: Connecting the Ancient World through Trade- Shannon Harris Castelo <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-silk-road-history-s-first-world-wide-web-shannon-harris-castelo> (Opening questions and discussion to start the lesson)
- Access to Jstor, Proquest, Googlemaps, Gale, and other on-line and hard copy research materials for the background

## Procedures:

### Day 1:

- Introduction: Break students into small groups (3-4) and pass out copies of maps/graphs (Appendix A). Students should use maps to complete **Handout #1** (20 minutes). Bring students together as a whole group to debrief. What are some of the relevant larger contextual factors influencing their Silk Road group?
- Assign each student to a profile (Appendix B). Instructor may want to pre-assign profiles with ELL/IEP differentiation in mind. Instructor may also want to set up norms and expectations in regard to dealing with a profile that students may disagree with or find offensive. Students should spend the rest of the class period and homework completing **Handout #2** to prepare for the mixer. (40 minutes)
- In order to prepare for the mixer, students will research and prepare their creative character. They should use their course readings and their online resources to accurately create a character who will interact with the other characters in the scenario on day 2. Each student should think about the characters background, characteristics, motivations, strengths, weaknesses, and obstacles they must overcome on the road. They should also think about which of the other characters will be allies and enemies.

### Day 2

- Students begin Day 2 with the **mixer** activity. Students should “try-on” the perspective they have been assigned and interact with other students. As students interact, they should complete **Handout #3**. Norms about respectful listening and simulation limits should be discussed before beginning. (40 minutes)

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- Come together as a whole class to debrief. What connections surprised students? What perspectives seem incompatible? Who had similar opinions, but for different reasons? Who had the same reasons, but different conclusions? Is anyone right? Is anyone wrong? (20 minutes)
- Students should complete reflection (**Handout #4**) for homework.

Day 3

- Begin with a discussion of homework. (15 minutes)
- Break students into small groups to complete **Handout #5**. (15 minutes) 1<sup>st</sup> groups should use alliances for organization and the 2<sup>nd</sup> groups should organize by regions.
- Final Debrief: Wrap-up, conclusions. Make ties to One Belt, One Road. (20 minutes)

## PERFORMANCE TASKS

Handouts, Mixer, Informal discussions

### Text of Document Excerpts/Source Materials:

**All student will be required to read these articles before the first class simulation.**

Article #1: Silk Road Background, History

<https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-middle-east/silk-road>

Article #2:

Inside 'Belt and Road,' China's mega-project that is linking 70 countries across Asia, Europe, and Africa

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<https://www.businessinsider.com/what-is-belt-and-road-china-infrastructure-project-2018-1>

### Famous Travelers on the Silk Road

In the history of the Silk Road, many renowned people left their footprints on this most historically important trade route, including eminent diplomats, generals and great monks, such as Zhang Qian, Ban Chao, Ban Yong and Fu Jiezi, Gan Ying, Xuanzang and Marco Polo.

Zhang Qian was the pioneer of the Silk Road who opened up this ancient trade road during the reign of the Han Emperor Wudi. From 139 BC to 119 BC, he went to the Western Regions twice and brought back an immense amount of information about the Central Asia and West Asia. The Silk Road marked the beginning of a new era with an extensive exchange of culture, economy and religion between China and the West.



The Statue of Ancient Travelers on Silk Road

Gan Ying: in 97 AD, in order to establish trade relations with Rome directly, Gan Ying was dispatched by Ban Chao to Da Qin (the old name of the Roman Empire), which was the farthest westbound travel and exploration. He set out on his journey from Qiuci (now Kuche or Kuqa). It was full of difficulties and dangers all the way. He crossed mountains, traversed desolate deserts and the Gobi, went over plateaus and finally reached Persian Gulf by way of Tiaozi (the present Iraq) and the Anxi Empire (Parthia). At that time, Anxi was a key transit station on the Silk Road. The merchants of Anxi monopolized the trade between China and Rome; they made a big profit by selling Chinese silk to Romans at very high prices. Therefore, the Anxi merchants exaggerated the hardships of crossing the sea and persuaded Gan Ying to give up his travel. As a result, Gan Ying followed their advice and returned to China. Although Gan Ying failed to finish his mission, he brought more detailed and reliable information about the Central Asia.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.travelchinaguide.com/silk-road/history/>

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Besides, Feng Liao, Ban Chao, Ban Yong and Fu Jiezi all contributed greatly to ensure peace on the Silk Road. The famous generals – Wei Qing and Huo Qubing defeated the Huns, which let down the barriers along the trade route. In the Tang Dynasty (618–907), Xuanzang set out on his journey to India to study Indian sutras along the Silk Road and wrote a book – Pilgrim to the West in Tang Dynasty. Then in the Yuan Dynasty (1206–1368), Marco Polo came to China and stayed for 17 years. After he returned Venice, Marco Polo dictated The Travels of Marco Polo that was recorded by Rustichello da Pisa in 1298.



Modern Travelers on Silk Road

In the history of China, Han Dynasty (206BC–220AD) and Tang Dynasty made intermarriages with Hun, Wusun and Tibet further consolidated the stable environment along the Silk Road and expanded it. Many princesses left their familiar hometown and reached to the remote states on a diplomatic mission. Wang Zhaojun (one of the four most beautiful women in Chinese history) and Princess Wen Cheng (married with the King of Tibet) made important contributions to the smooth flow of the Silk Road.

The main travelers of the Silk Road were merchants who organized various caravans to cross the Gobi Deserts. Overcoming all kinds of hardships, they transported goods for sale between China and the West to gain great profit. Some religious disciples missionized their faith through this road. From nobles to beggars and prisoners, all kinds of people once had gone to their destinations by this world-famous Silk Road.

## Appendix A: To be used with Handout #1 Map #1

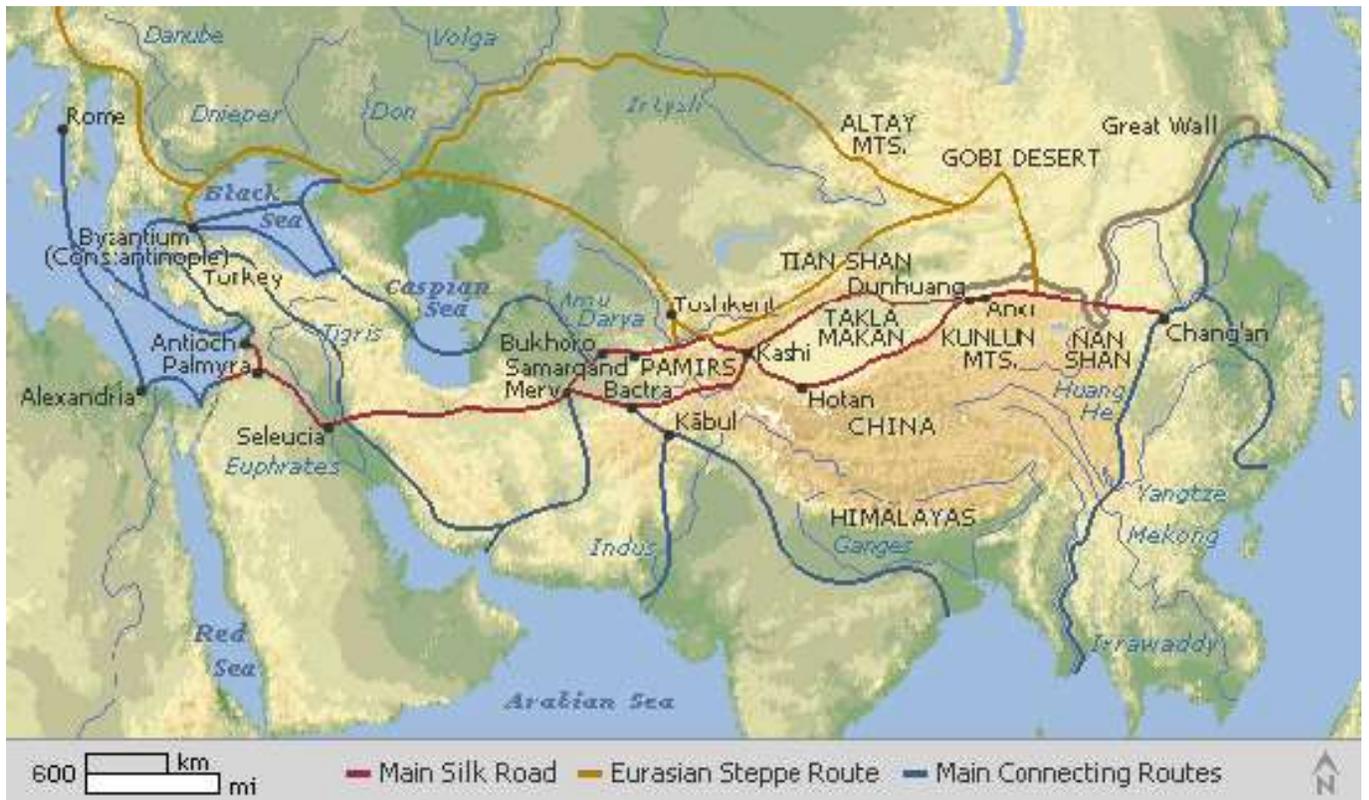
### World Map and Silk Road Travel Routes



The overland Silk Road & ancient routes cross the Asian continent, from China in Asia, to Turkey and the Mediterranean, where the routes extend by sea to Europe, Arabia, and North Africa. Central Asia is the heart of the largest landmass on earth, known as Eurasia. Central Asia's role as the conduit between cultures is symbolized by the "Silk Road."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.silkroutes.net/orient/mapssilkroustrade.htm>

## Map #2



As the most well-known overland trading route of ancient civilization, the Silk Road grew under the Chinese Han Dynasty (202 BC - AD 220) during the first and second centuries AD, and connected the Yellow River Valley of China to the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.silkroutes.net/orient/mapssilkroutrade.htm>

### Map #3



Map #4

# China's Silk Road push

China has just announced a multi-billion dollar fund to revive pancontinental land routes and develop maritime links, aiming to both expand commerce and perhaps give it more influence in a freight system dominated by European shippers.



According to Reuters calculations, China's state-backed firms have already invested at least \$5 billion in transport infrastructure over the past decade.

Country	Port	Investment	Investors
<b>BELGIUM</b>	Antwerp	At least \$3.94 million	-Cosco Pacific bought a 25% stake in 2004, China Merchants later got a stake through its part-purchase of Terminal Link. The two now have a 29% interest in Antwerp.
<b>GREECE</b>	Piraeus Port	At least \$624 million	-Cosco Pacific, for the right to run and upgrade part of the port.
<b>DJIBOUTI</b>	Port of Djibouti	\$185 million	-China Merchants, for a 23.5% stake
<b>KENYA</b>	Lamu Port Mombasa port	\$484 million \$66.7 million	-China Road & Bridge -China Communications Construction Company
<b>PAKISTAN</b>	Gwadar port	\$198 million	-China paid for 80% of the port's Phase I
<b>SRI LANKA</b>	Hambantota port Colombo Port City Colombo Port	At least \$1.9 billion \$1.43 billion \$500 million	-China Exim Bank -China Harbour Engineering -China Communications Construction Company -China Development Bank

Source: Reuters; Xinhua  
C. Inon, 10/11/2014



**Appendix B: Character profiles handout cards for students. (Day #1 and 2)**

	<p><b>Chinese Merchant</b></p>
	<p><b>Soldier-Chinese</b></p>
	<p><b>Pilgrim-Chinese</b></p>
	<p><b>Guide-Chinese</b></p>



**Indian Merchant**



**Soldier-Indian**



**Pilgrim-Indian**



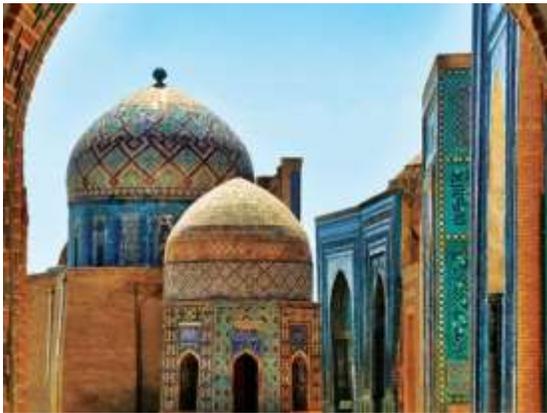
**Guide-Indian**



**Persian Merchant**



**Soldier-Persian**



**Pilgrim-Persian**



**Guide-Persian**



#### Map #4

1. Let's look at the maritime routes on this map. Where is China's largest investment? Why do you think China invested so heavily in this project?
  
2. Do some research to see what has happened to that port project and explain here.

**Debrief/Summary** – What are some key contextual factors that will influence the traders, pilgrims, soldiers, and guides on their trails tomorrow?

## MIXER PREPARATION

For the mixer, you will create your character in the Silk Road journey. This perspective may/may not reflect your own personal beliefs and opinions. Please use your textbook and online sources to create your character. Have fun with it!

1. Create your character based on the following criteria:  
Background, characteristics, motivations, strengths, weaknesses, and obstacles they must overcome on the road. They should also think about which of the other characters will be allies and enemies.  
If you are a religious character, explain your religious perspective and how it might be a strength or weakness.
2. Actively analyze how difficult this journey might be and what trials you will encounter. How do you think you will do on the “Silk Road Games!”
3. Doing your own research, find and read 1-2 additional documents that give insight to your assigned perspective. Create 2-4 additional statements your profile might “say.” Attach a copy of one of these documents on your homework #1 handout.
4. Finally, think about how the One Belt, One Road initiative may cause complications for China in the future.

## Handout #3—Day 2

## MIXER

Directions: As you meet different people at the mixer, place them in one of these boxes (if appropriate). Write their name and a couple of notes as to why you put them in that box.

<p><b>HURT</b></p> <p><i>How has this person been hurt? How might he or she be hurt in the future?</i></p>	<p><b>BENEFITS</b></p> <p><i>How might the person benefit? How might he or she benefit in the future?</i></p>	<p><b>SIMILAR</b></p> <p><i>How are your situations/perspectives similar?</i></p>
<p><b>LIFE CHANGES</b></p> <p><i>Why does this person have to make a life change? What might this individual do?</i></p>	<p><b>TAKING ACTION</b></p> <p><i>What is the person's idea or action?</i></p>	<p><b>JOINT ACTION</b> with you</p> <p><i>What action might you take together?</i></p>
<p><b>DIFFERENT</b></p> <p><i>How is this person's opinion/perspective different from your own?</i></p>	<p><b>SIMILAR</b></p> <p><i>How are your situations/perspectives similar?</i></p>	<p><b>HUMAN RIGHTS</b></p> <p><i>How does this person's situation or perspective violate human rights?</i></p>

## Handout #4

## MIXER HOMEWORK

1. Reflect on one perspective you better understand as a result of the mixer.
2. Reflect on one thing that surprised you from a conversation during the mixer.
3. Reflect on an aspect of the mixer that made you uncomfortable.
4. List some questions you still have about travel and trade on the Ancient Silk Road.

## Handout 5 MIXER DEBRIEF

In your small **group of your allies**, list what you collectively decide to be the “Top 5” challenges to survival and success on the Silk Road.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Write your final ideas on a large sheet of paper and hang on the classroom wall for a gallery walk.

### MIXER DEBRIEF

In your **small region group**, list what you collectively decide to be the “Top 5” challenges to survival and success on the Silk Road.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Write your final ideas on a large sheet of paper and hang on the classroom wall for a gallery walk.

