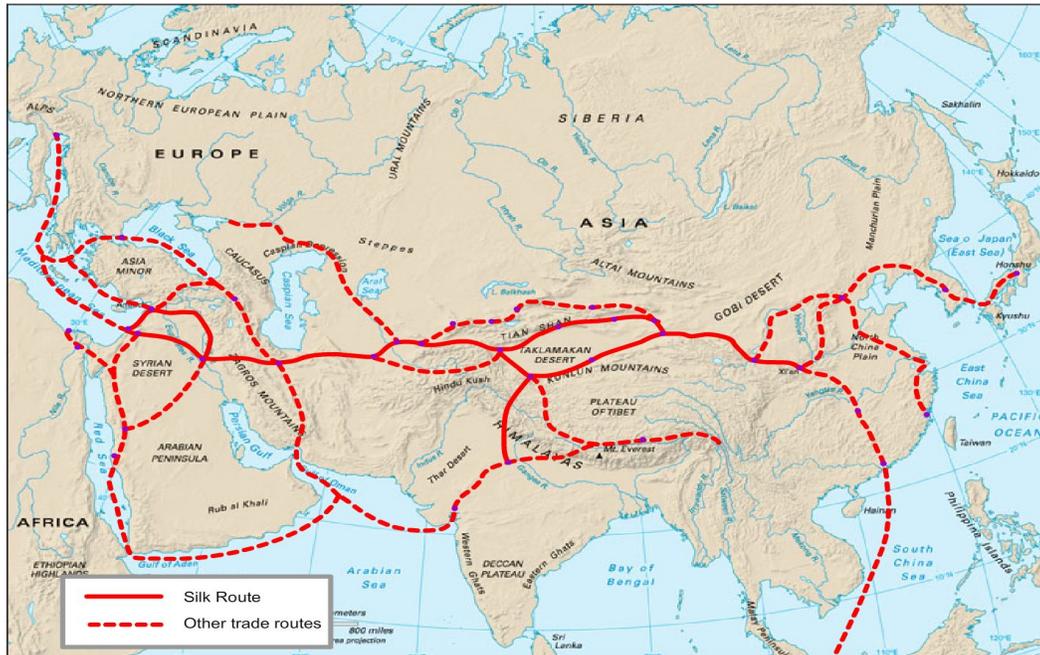


# SILK ROAD SIMULATION

## FINISHING ANCIENT CHINA – LEAD INTO GREECE & ROME



### Overview

Students will try their hand at surviving on the infamous Silk Road.

The "Silk Road" is not one road, but rather a network of roads passing through different regions. Furthermore, the "Silk Road" did not include trading of silk. Many other commodities were traded, from gold and ivory to exotic animals and plants. Merchants traveling to China carried gold and other precious metals, ivory, gems, and glass. Merchants headed west carried furs, ceramics, jade, bronze, and iron. Many of the goods often changed hands several times.

Merchants did not travel with their caravans across the whole silk road route; they would transport their goods between two major cities, through middlemen, who would then sell them to other merchants. Roman traders did not make it all the way to China, nor did Chinese merchants travel to Rome, although their goods were appreciated in both places. Along with commodities that were traded along the silk route, so too were new ideas, religions, medical knowledge, scientific and technological innovations.

Ensure students understand the role of the middlemen.

Students will "travel" through different landforms of the Silk Road; including travelling through passes in the snowcapped Himalayas, crossing the roaring Indus River, and traipsing through the Taklamakan and Gobi deserts in search of water in desert oases.

Students will split into groups of merchants from different countries that famously traded along the silk road; India, Egypt, China, Rome, Middle East & Various Asian Countries.

### **(Possible Variations)**

Students split into groups of merchants and middlemen.

Students decide what they want to trade and with who (which middlemen).

Some middlemen will not deliver the good/others will (*How do the students know who to pick?*)

Students could pick from a shortlist of cities from [this map](#) that middlemen have already been assigned to and told to her deliver or NOT deliver the package.

### **Simulation Scenarios**

#### **ALL GROUPS:**

- Each group has about the same amount of resources, goods, food, supplies, horses, camels, etc.
- Each group begins from a different location and heads out on a different course.
- Each group ends at the same market to sell/trade their goods.
- No group as additional servants or hired help.

#### **Group A**

1. Set course and take inventory of goods for sale; set expected profit. Inventory should be taken for each item and weighed for transport. Plan route for how far they can go per day and then travel to that location and make camp for the night.
2. Group must survive sandstorm, which includes getting their supplies across a distance of three meters in a high wind (from a fan). Students make a list of supplies for each person (camel?) to carry and then devise a way to get the balloons across the windstorm. Balloons lost will lose whatever supplies are on the inventory sheet, either good for sell or trade or needed for survival, such as water.
3. Runs into bandits and lose  $\frac{1}{4}$  of their good for sell/trade.

#### **Group B**

1. Set course and take inventory of goods for sale; set expected profit. Inventory should be taken for each item and weighed for transport. Plan route for how far they can go per day and then travel to that location and make camp for the night.
2. Group must survive sandstorm, which includes getting their supplies across a distance of three meters in a high wind (from a fan). Students make a list of supplies for each person (camel?) to carry and then devise a way to get the balloons across the windstorm. Balloons lost will lose whatever supplies are on the inventory sheet, either good for sell or trade or needed for survival, such as water.
3. One camel is bitten by a venomous snake and dies. Students must decide how to get that camel's goods to market or leave them behind.

#### **Group C**

1. Set course and take inventory of goods for sale; set expected profit. Inventory should be taken for each item and weighed for transport. Plan route for how far they can go per day and then travel to that location and make camp for the night.
2. Group must survive sandstorm, which includes getting their supplies across a distance of three meters in a high wind (from a fan). Students make a list of supplies for each person (camel?) to carry and then devise a way to get the balloons across the windstorm. Balloons lost will lose whatever supplies are on the inventory sheet, either good for sell or trade or needed for survival, such as water.
3. Group loses most of their water and must find an oasis to survive.

### **Group D**

1. Set course and take inventory of goods for sale; set expected profit. Inventory should be taken for each item and weighed for transport. Plan route for how far they can go per day and then travel to that location and make camp for the night.
2. Group must survive sandstorm, which includes getting their supplies across a distance of three meters in a high wind (from a fan). Students make a list of supplies for each person (camel?) to carry and then devise a way to get the balloons across the windstorm. Balloons lost will lose whatever supplies are on the inventory sheet, either good for sell or trade or needed for survival, such as water.
3. Two members of group become too ill to travel for a day. Group must decide whether to stay together or break up in an attempt to get goods before other vendors get to market.

### **Group E**

1. Set course and take inventory of goods for sale; set expected profit. Inventory should be taken for each item and weighed for transport. Plan route for how far they can go per day and then travel to that location and make camp for the night.
2. Group must survive sandstorm, which includes getting their supplies across a distance of three meters in a high wind (from a fan). Students make a list of supplies for each person (camel?) to carry and then devise a way to get the balloons across the windstorm. Balloons lost will lose whatever supplies are on the inventory sheet, either good for sell or trade or needed for survival, such as water.
3. Wild dogs kill one camel during the night and group must decide what to do to get their good to market.

### **Day 1 | Commodities Inventory Lists**

**What are *Commodities*:** *raw materials or primary agricultural products that can be bought and sold, such as copper or coffee.*

Each group will fill out an inventory list.

Teacher could either direct students to research items traded on the silk road from their assigned region OR provide a list and have the students choose items from that list.

### *Silk Road Inventory*

#### **Starting Country:**

Item	Quantity	Base Value	Total Value

(List below taken from: [indiana.edu](http://indiana.edu) Journey's Along the Silk Road)

#### ***From India***

- Household slaves
- Pets and arena animals
- Exotic furs
- Cashmere wool

- Raw and finished cotton (cotton plants have been cultivated in India for 4,000 years)
- Spinach (mainly from Nepal)
- Sandalwood and other exotic woods
- Palm-oil
- Cane-sugar
- Perfumes and aromatics
- Gems (rubies, sapphires and emeralds; diamonds, surprisingly, were not prized by the Chinese)

#### ***From China***

- Silk
- Skins
- Iron
- Mirrors
- Weapons
- Porcelain (first manufactured around the 8<sup>th</sup> century)
- Lacquerware
- Jade (from Khotan)
- Rhubarb
- Tea
- Paper (traditionally thought to have been invented by the court eunuch Cai Lun in 105 CE)
- Gunpowder (invented in China around the 7<sup>th</sup> century and first used by them for military purposes around the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It reached Europe during the fourteenth century.)
- Medicines – Ephedra (Chinese: *Mahuang* – used for millennia in China to treat respiratory diseases. Ephedrine was originally made from ephedra.)
- Epsom salts
- Elixirs for immortality (which often shortened, rather than extended, life)
- Ginseng (the best was from Korea)
- Snake bile (collected in Southern China and Indochina; used for whooping cough, rheumatic pain, high fever, infantile convulsion, hemiplegia, hemorrhoids, gum bleeding, and skin infections)
- Seaweed

#### ***From various parts of Asia***

- Precious and semi-precious stones (including lapis lazuli mined in Afghanistan, jadeite from Burma, rock crystal, carnelians and other quartzes, rubies from Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia and sapphires from India, Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka)
- Jewelry, ivory, tortoiseshell, rhinoceros horn, seashells and pearls
- Ornamental woods, gum resins and aromatics (camphor from China, Japan, Borneo and Indochina was highly coveted)
- Silver and gold (especially from Southern China, Tibet and Indochina, but also imported from many other parts of the world)
- Spices (especially pepper, ginger, cardamom, turmeric, nutmeg and cloves and cinnamon)
- Cochineal and indigo used for dyeing fabrics and cosmetics
- Minerals (sulphur and realgar)
- Ceramics
- Horses (Central Asian breeds were especially prized in China) and camels
- Flowers (including peonies, roses, camellias, chrysanthemums and tulips (tulips from Central Asia and Turkey first arrived in Europe in the 1550s and were so coveted in seventeenth-century Holland that a single bulb could sell for 5,000 guilders, more than the price of a house!))
- Alfalfa and millet for animal feed
- Human beings: acrobats, Central Asian jugglers and musicians, Central Asian grooms, dwarves, household slaves, South Sea Island pearl divers, Southeast Asian dancers, foreign guards

#### ***From Persia and the countries of the Middle East***

- Incense (from southern Arabia)
- Dates, pistachios, peaches, walnuts
- Tyrian purple and indigo for dyeing
- Frankincense and myrrh
- Storax (an aromatic resin)
- Muslin cloth
- Wines
- Glassware
- Olive oil
- Silver vessels (especially the work of the Sasanian craftsmen of Persia)

### ***Commodities from the West***

*Merchants on the land routes and Roman ships*

- Wool and linen textiles
- Carpets
- Baltic amber
- Mediterranean coral
- Asbestos
- Bronze vessels
- Lamps
- Glass vessels and glass beads
- Wines
- Papyrus
- Huge quantities of coins
- Ambergris (from the sperm whale, used in the manufacture of perfume and collected along the African coast)
- Entertainers
- Exotic animals
- Opium (opium poppies probably originated in the eastern Mediterranean and reached China in about the 7<sup>th</sup> century)

### ***Religions***

***Spread Along the Trade Routes in All Directions***

- Buddhism (arose in India and spread in both directions as far east as Japan and as far west as modern day Turkmenistan)
- Islam (founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, it spread in all directions and now attracts a worldwide following of more than one billion devotees)
- Christianity (arose in the Eastern Mediterranean and spread throughout the Roman world. Nestorian Christianity spread eastwards after the expulsion of Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, during the 5<sup>th</sup> century. It reached China by 635)
- Manichaeism (developed in the Middle East during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and reached China by the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century)
- Zoroastrianism (the state religion of Persia until the arrival of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, it had spread eastwards to China and India by the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century)

### ***Technology and Innovations***

***Acquired by China from the lands to the west***

- Harnesses, saddles and stirrups (from the steppe nomads)
- Construction-methods for bridges and mountain roads
- Knowledge of medicinal plants and poisons
- Cultivation of cotton
- Seafaring techniques

***Acquired by the West from Asia***

- Chinese inventions
- Medical techniques (especially from Arab scholars such as Ibn Sina)
- Science and mathematics (algebra, astronomy, and the Arab numerals that we use in the West today; the zero came from India)
- The use of passports (a Mongol innovation)
- Military techniques and strategies
- Architectural styles and devices (the Persian invention of the squinch allowed the addition of a dome and led to the construction of many of the world's great buildings)

## Day 2 | Sandstorm Simulation

Students participate in Part 2 of their scenarios

**Materials:** Balloons, 4 Fans, Markers

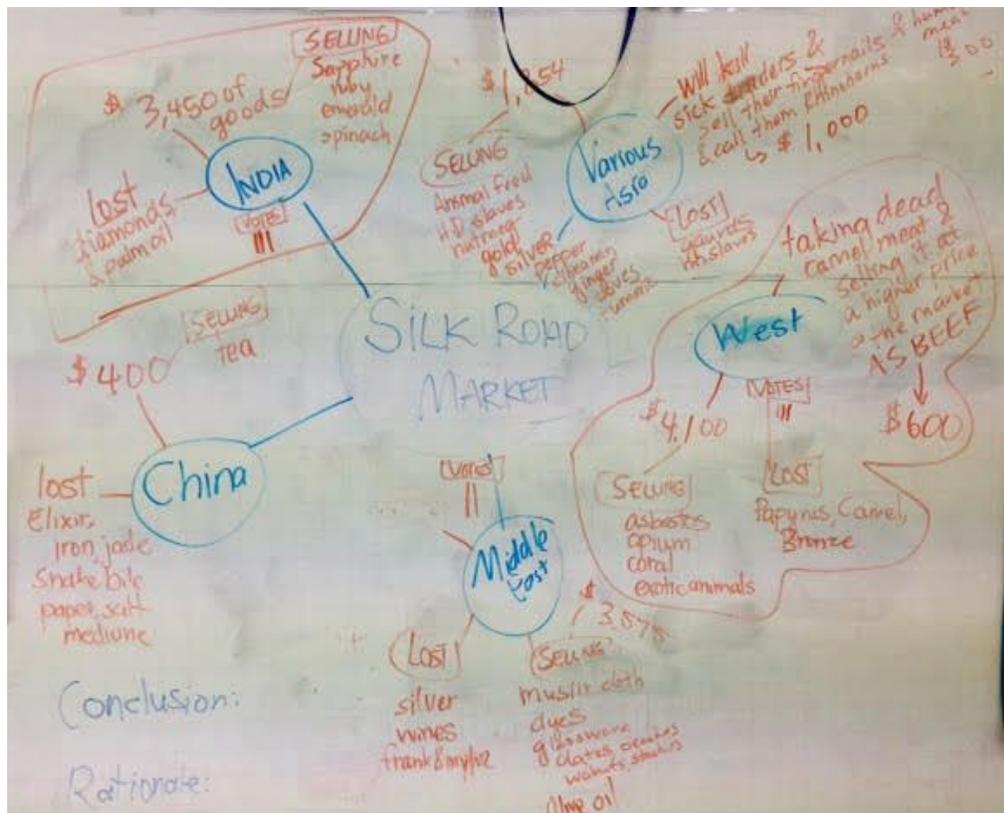
**Directions:** Students write the merchandise that is "in" each balloon. Students proceed to try to move the balloons across the given space (without carrying them), while the fans are blowing. Any balloons lost, is lost merchandise that then can no longer sell at the market in Tehran.

## Day 3 | Discussion @ the Market

Who would profit most (based on what each country has left to sell - consider dollar value and demand for those items - usability/practicality)?

Groups have to talk to each other to see how much of each item they have left to sell from their inventory list.

Groups have to draw conclusions and support with a rationale.



#### Day 4 - [Discussion](#) of Middlemen and Relation to Globalization and Current Economics

Had a verbal discussion as a whole class, students then responded on a shared document their answers to the questions below. Followed up as a whole class to finish off understanding of globalization, middlemen and modern day connection to silk road.

#### **POST SIMULATION DISCUSSION**

Discuss with your students the role middlemen play, and modern examples of middlemen.

##### ***What is the role of middlemen?***

*Possible answers: Middlemen enable the exchange of goods from one entity or region to another. This enables people to exchange goods without actually meeting the other person. Instead, they can go through middlemen, who **ensure** that the trade is made.*

##### ***What are their advantages? Disadvantages?***

*Possible answers: Advantages - Middlemen make it possible for people to exchange goods without actually contacting the other person directly. For example, we have a lot of goods that were made in China, but we don't actually have to go to China to get these goods.*

*Disadvantages – Middlemen need to be paid for their services, so it increases the price of a good when it has to go through a middleman. Also, if middlemen have a monopoly on the industry, they can take high profits from their services.*

##### ***What are some examples of modern middlemen?***

*Possible answers: Amazon.com or Wal-mart (or any department store) could all be considered middlemen because they enable us to get goods from other places without actually coming in contact with those places. We can order something online from across the country. Department stores bring goods from around the country or around the world to our communities so that we can buy them. We don't have to travel to a different state or a different country where a particular factory is in order to buy something we want. (i.e. We can buy Toyotas here at our local car dealer rather than having to travel all the way to Japan to buy one.)*

***How would our economy be different without middlemen? Would prices of goods be lower or higher?***

*We would be much more limited in our buying selection. We would have to buy things that were produced nearby. For example, people from colder, northern areas would not be able to enjoy bananas, oranges, pineapples, or other fruits. Although middlemen charge a fee for their services, prices would ultimately be higher without them. Items produced overseas in China may be cheaper than before they are shipped through Wal-mart, but are still cheaper in comparison to some products produced domestically. Although the cost to manufacture a pair of jeans in China is around \$5, for you to personally go to China and buy a pair of jeans would cost thousands of dollars. And for jeans to be produced in the USA would be more expensive than the \$20 you can currently buy a pair of jeans for. So, even though middlemen like Wal-mart are making a profit from their sales, overall it saves US consumers money to use a middleman.*