

Summer Institute 2024: Cross-Cultural Perspectives Along the Silk Road

Partnership with the British Library

Lesson Plan Template

Please include the following sections in your lesson plans in the order printed. The standard format will help support the placement on the website to be shared with other teachers interested in the topic. This format may be used for unit design as well as a specific lesson. The preliminary lesson will be presented to peers at the end of our trip in July. The final plans are due by August 5, 2024, and may be submitted to Karen Williams, SMCOE, by August 5, 2024. The lesson plan will be uploaded to the Tang Center for Silk Road Studies website:
<https://ieas.berkeley.edu/centers/tang-center-silk-road-studies-tcsrs/k-12-connections/k-12-connections-lesson-plans>

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Unit/Lesson: Storytelling along the Silk Road/ Comparative Study of Morality Fables told along the Silk Road.

Essential Question: How do moral fables illustrate the interconnectedness of different cultures and their values within the Silk Road network?

Guiding Questions:

- 1) What is the Silk Road and what countries/territories did it encompass?
- 2) What is a fable and what characteristics are present in fables?
- 3) How were stories and fables spread throughout the Silk Road?
- 4) How did ancient literature influence modern literature?
- 5) Is there ever a true original source or is literature a measure of collective inspiration?

Introduction/ Overview:

Silk Road Network and Storytelling :

“The vast trade networks of the Silk Roads carried more than just merchandise and precious commodities. In fact, the constant movement and mixing of populations brought about the widespread transmission of knowledge, ideas, cultures and beliefs, which had a profound impact on the history and civilizations of the Eurasian peoples. Travelers along the Silk Roads were attracted not only by trade but also by the intellectual and cultural exchange taking place in cities along the Silk Roads, many of which developed into hubs of culture and learning. Science, arts and literature, as well as crafts and technologies were thus shared and disseminated into societies along the lengths of these routes, and in this way, languages, religions, and cultures developed and influenced one another” (“About the Silk Roads | Silk Roads Programme”)

“The Silk Roads facilitated the exchange of various literary traditions around the world as stories spread via monks, scholars, pilgrims, travelers, diplomats and traders moving across these vast routes. The translation of different literary works by scholars living and working at various crossroads of the Silk Roads further aided the diffusion of different works of literature. As written material is often fragile and easily damaged, archaeological material can be used to further understanding of the literary exchanges that took place along the Silk Roads where there may be gaps in the written record. Murals uncovered in the ruins of the ancient Sogdian city of Panjakent, located in modern Tajikistan, depict illustrations of some well-known fables and stories originating in other parts of the world. These murals illustrate interconnections between the literary traditions of Greece and the Iranian Plateau, the Iranian Plateau and the Indian Subcontinent, and China and the Indian Subcontinent, in the early Middle Ages (from around the 6th to the 8th century CE) (“Cultural Selection: Illustrations of Literary Exchange along the Silk Roads | Silk Roads Programme”)

Content Standards

Reading: Literature:

Reading Standards for Literature (6th Grade):

- **RL.6.2:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
- **RL.6.3:** Describe how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
- **RL.6.9:** Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

Objective:

- Students will compare and contrast Aesop’s fables with fables from other ancient cultures, identify common themes, and understand the cultural contexts of these fables.
- Students will gain an understanding of how stories spread and changed along the Silk Road trade routes according to cultural influences.

Materials/Resources:

[Brief Overview of the Silk Roads Video](#) .

- This can be used as an anticipatory or as a review.
- [Google form response questions](#) can be edited or simplified. 10 are included but you can edit to reduce questions.

Texts:

Group#1 Aesop (Greek) [The Wolf and the Crane](#) vs. (India) [The Lion and The Crane](#)
Group #2 Aesop (Greek)- [The Fox and The Crow](#) vs. (Jataka) [The Jackal and the Crow](#) pg. 245 on doc
Group #3 Aesop (Greek) [The Fox and the Crow](#) vs. (Panchatantra) [The Monkey and The Crocodile](#)
Group #4 Islam- [The Parable of the Two Frogs](#) vs. Summerian Proverb [The Wren and The Elephant](#)
Group #4 China- [Race to the Finish](#) vs. Mongolia [The Camel vs. The Mouse](#)
Group #5 (Jataka) -[The Gold Mallard](#) pg. 141 on doc vs. (Panchatantra) [The Gold Giving Snake](#)

[Comparing Texts Handout](#)

[Venn Diagram Handout](#)

Table tops or paper (to create Venn diagram)

Whiteboard Markers

Writing paper and pencils

Venn diagram templates/instructions

Stickies or small scraps (3 per person)

Internet access for Research (optional)

Teacher Preparation:

Prior to the lesson you will need to assess how much background information your students know. Included is information for the pre-teaching which can be shortened or omitted if you feel that your students have enough background information.

They should be familiar with the Silk Road networks and geography. Having a map of network routes during this lesson is helpful. There should also be some discussion on who Aesop was, time period, the methods of storytelling of various cultures.

Video (5min) - [Overview of the Silk Road](#)

Pre-teaching

- Discussion on how and why stories were shared in ancient times.
- Read [Literary Exchange Along the Silk Road](#)
- Fables and Storytelling
- Vocab

Time/Timeline (1-3 class periods)

Procedures

- Review Lecture and/or Silk Road Video with Questions (15 -20 minutes)
- Discussion of Aesop and Fables- Model with Aesop's [The Tortoise and the Hare](#) and discuss the characteristics of a morality fable (animal characters, associated tributes to the animals if any, conflict, moral or lesson).
- Review any new vocabulary, particularly Jataka, Panchatantra, and Buddha.

- Assign Groups. There are 6 text sets total so you can have multiples of group 1,2, etc.
- Distribute text sets or you can give them the links on slides. Lesson is designed to be either tech free or online, or a mixture of both.
- Have teams compare texts & complete handout (15 min)
- Venn Diagram Activity (10 min). You can use handout or you can have them draw on tables with whiteboard markers.
- Walk-about- students will look at each others' diagrams taking note of the similarities part of the diagram. You can also do this part as a discussion or note-taking activity.
- Closing Activity- **Notice and Wonder**. Have students create one post-it of something they noticed about what they read or learned from the activity. Then have them create one post-it about something they wonder. You can also create this part on a padlet so that students can see everyone's responses. This is a good way to lead further discussion about the similarities between all the fables.

–Extension Opportunities–

- Comparative essay writing.
- Create an original fable writing activity.
- Research on Aesop and his influence on fables throughout the Silk Road using database and text sources.
- Silk Road Choice Board
- Have students locate/note on map the origin of their fables to further highlight the spread of ideas along the Silk Road.

Work Cited

“About the Silk Roads | Silk Roads Programme.” *UNESCO*,

<https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/about-silk-roads>. Accessed 7 July 2024.

“Cultural Selection: Illustrations of Literary Exchange Along the Silk Roads | Silk Roads

Programme.” *UNESCO*, 2024, [https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/cultural-selection-](https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/cultural-selection-illustrations-literary-exchange-along-silk-roads)

[illustrations-literary-exchange-along-silk-roads](https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/cultural-selection-illustrations-literary-exchange-along-silk-roads). Accessed 7 July 2024.