

Institute on China 2016
Group Projects Abroad
Fulbright-Hays-UC Berkeley

MOGAO CAVES UNIT
Landscapes & Perspectives
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GRADE LEVEL

7th grade Humanities (Language Arts/Social Studies)

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What was the purpose of the Silk Road? Where was the Silk Road?
2. What items (goods or ideas) were traded along the Silk Road?
3. What was the influence of the Silk Road on China and those who traveled it?
4. What is the most significant part of the caves (past or present)?
5. What were the central themes within the cave stories?
6. Within the stories, and the drawings used to tell them, what was the most important aspect? How can this be expressed within your own writing?

INTRODUCTION

The Silk Road is said to have originated around 139 BC when Emperor Wudi sent merchants to purchase horses from the nomads. After the more than 13 year journey to accomplish this, Zhang came back with stories of a great civilization, Rome. Rome was also interested in China's prized cloth, silk and the traders were willing to take great risks in order to acquire silk and thus the Silk Road formed.

The Silk Road was not truly a road but a series of roads or paths that formed trade routes. These trade routes connected the East, China to the West, The Mediterranean Sea. It is estimated that the Silk Road was over 4,000 miles long at it's height. Merchants and other travelers rarely traveled the entire route, but rather traveled in stages, exchanging goods along the way. On the Silk Road, there were many goods exchanged amongst travelers. Some of the goods exchanged on the Silk Road were spices, tea, porcelain, and of course silk. While these goods kept the Silk Road going and were the main purpose for most travelers like merchants, the ideas that were exchanged on the Silk Road had a great fundamental impact on all of those involved. One of the main ideas that was exchanged on the Silk Road was the religion of Buddhism. The spread of Buddhism and the ideals can be found throughout the Silk Road but especially in Dunhuang.

Dunhuang was a very important stop along the Silk Road. It is an oasis town right at the edge of the Taklamakan Desert. Dunhuang was the last stop before the desert for those traveling west, and it was the first stop after the desert for the travelers coming to the east. This made Dunhuang a hub on the Silk Road. Dunhuang helped to connect the east and the west on the Silk road, and due to this the spread of Buddhism can be seen in Dunhuang and Mogao Caves.

The Mogao Caves, also known as the Thousand Buddha Grottoes, are 492 caves dug into the side of a cliff outside of Dunhuang. Inside the Mogao caves are evidence of the spread of Buddhism and contain examples of Buddhist art spanning over 1,000 years. The caves were painted across multiple dynasties throughout China with the height at the Tang Dynasty. The first caves was dug out for Buddhist meditation and worship. Throughout these caves are sculptures and paintings that reflect Buddhism as well as other religions at the time like Hinduism or Taoism. The Buddhist paintings throughout the caves were also a way

to pass on the tradition of oral storytelling. Many of the cave paintings tell stories from the Jatakas Tales, or the past lives of Buddha, along with stories of redemption and people using Buddhism to find nirvana.

There are many cave stories throughout the Mogao Caves and this unit will introduce and teach students how to analyze the cave drawings and stories, determine themes, and use their creativity to create their own cave narrative.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will **review** what they have learned about the Silk Road through brainstorming the areas of study so far (China, Japan, the Arabian Peninsula, and Northern Africa).
- Students will work together to **create** a list of the different goods and ideas that were traded along the Silk Road along with their influence.
- Table Groups will **determine** the influence of the Silk Road on the travelers and different countries.
- Students will **analyze** actual cave drawings and their associated stories for themes and they will **determine** the most important aspect of the stories.
- Students will **appreciate** the drawings with the cave and their meanings.
- Students will **write** a fictional narrative based off of one of the cave drawings of their choice.
- Students will **create** their own cave oral retelling or video for their story.

UNIT LESSONS

1. China in the Middle Ages (Tang Dynasty, Spread of Buddhism, Developments in Tang and Song, Confucian Thought, Trade, Influence of discoveries)
2. Writing: Narrative Stories
3. Listening and Speaking: Oral Retelling of the story

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

[My Journey to the Silk Road](#) (Google Tour) or [Getty Video](#)

[Mogao Cave Images](#) (Google Slide)

Cave Stories: Queen Vaidehi, Nine Colored Deer, & Prince and the Tiger (attached)

[Narrative Writing Plot Chart](#) (attached)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Print

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Du, Doucheng, and Shuqing Wang. *Dunhuang & Silk Road*. Shenzhen: Sea Sky Pub. House, 2005. Print.

Film

Getty Research Institute. (2016, May 16). *Cave Temples of Dunhuang: Art, History, and Conservation*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LbyuIi9BYI&app=desktop>

Internet

"Eight Men Ferrying a Statue of the Buddha." *Harvard Art Museum's Collections*. President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2004. Web. 10 July 2016.

Chang, Shuhong. "Illustration of "Nine-Coloured Deer Jāaka"" *Hong Kong Heritage Museum*. Hong Kong Heritage Museum, 5 Jan. 2015. Web. 10 July 2016.

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Plot-Chart-Diagram-Arc-Pixar-Short-Films-Study-w-Answer-Keys-912822> - Plot charts for pre-films

STANDARDS

Common Core Standards

Reading: Key Ideas and Details

2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

Writing: Text Types and Purposes

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

- A. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
- B. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- C. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.
- D. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.
- E. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.

Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration

2. Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.

SAMPLE LESSON

- Analyzing Cave Drawings for common characteristics and narrative elements
- Creating narrative writing off of cave drawings and turning it into oral story or video

TIME REQUIREMENT

5 CLASS PERIODS (45 minute-period)

EQUIPMENT

Computer with internet connection and hooked up to the projector, Narrative Handouts (blank plot charts), scratch paper, images of the cave drawings, Helpful: Student devices

TEACHER PREPARATION

LESSON: Narrative Writing with Mogao Cave Paintings

- This lesson is done after students have already learned about the Silk Road. The beginning activity is to be used as a review to get the students thinking before introducing the caves.

1. Familiarize/Study: The significance of Dunhuang on the Silk Road. Along with the Mogao Caves that are located in Dunhuang. In addition, read the 3 example cave stories and familiarize yourself with those paintings as well as the paintings that your students can use for their own narrative writing.

2. Pre-teach: The Silk Road

You could use the essential questions at the beginning of the lesson to guide your pre-teaching of the Silk Road.

3. Pre-teach: Narrative Writing

- Parts of a narrative (exposition, rising action, complications/problems, Climax, falling action, resolution - and for this story theme).

- Plot Chart

4. Typically, when teaching Narrative writing, I have students analyze short stories and even short video clips (using Pixar videos - attached) to identify and all of the different parts of a plot.

5. Make copies of blank plot charts (attached). The students will need 2 total: one for the first story that you analyze together and one for their narrative story.

6. Prepare rubrics for Narrative Writing. When I am working with students and writing. We typically review or create the rubric together, so the students know and understand the expectation.

7. Prepare a list of themes or ideas to help give the students ideas about what they might see or head in the cave paintings and drawings.

8. When teaching Narrative writing, I often teach word choice at the same time. We discuss different ways to improve our writing through our word choice.

Lesson Procedure

Day 1 (40-45 minutes)

1. As a reminder for the class about the Silk Road and how it was not just about China. We will have a class discussion about the Silk Road.
 - a. There are 3 total question pages that are to be used as a guide for students to review for the Silk Road. Start with the first two.
 - i. What was the purpose of the Silk Road? Where was the Silk Road?
 - ii. What items (goods or ideas) were traded along the Silk Road?
 - b. First, give the students the questions and time to come up with ideas independently.
 - c. Think - Pair - Share with a partner at the table
 - d. Then the table groups talk with each, students can write down ideas that they forgot to add to record on their own.
 - e. Each table shares out one of the ideas for the class.
 - f. Record these answers straight into the Powerpoint/Google Slides presentation, so the students will be able to access the information later (I always put the notes on the class calendar).
 - g. The first two question pages should take about 7-10 minutes depending on your students.
 - i. *If this takes longer, I typically give my students a chance to find a partner to share with across the room, so they can move around a little bit. I also circulate while the students are talking to listen and direct them to the right path if they are stuck.
2. Question 3 is a little bit more in depth and the students are going to complete a 3-5 minute quick write for this question.
 - a. What was the influence of the Silk Road on China and those who traveled it?
 - b. After the quick write, I ask students to volunteer to share their ideas. They do not have to read the quick write word for word, but they have to share one main idea that they came across and it cannot repeat someone else.
3. My Journey to the Silk Road
 - a. At the end of the lesson, I plan to share my personal journey to the Silk Road and how I got there (Shanghai, Suzhou, Xi'an, Dunhuang and the Mogao Caves). This is a Google Tour of photos from my trip. The students can ask questions if there is time.
4. If you do not want to show my trip, you can give students reference to the Mogao Caves and show the video from the Getty.
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LbyuIi9BYI&app=desktop>

Day 2 (40-45 minutes)

Start with story #1 the Red Spotted Deer or the Deer of Nine Colors. You can going to teach the students how to analyze the cave drawings and the stories.

1. First start with the images of the cave drawings. (Using the projector or student devices. Ask the students what they notice. *I would record their findings and ideas.
 - a. What they notice could be big or small. Just ask them to tell you everything.
 - b. They could make predictions about what they think the story might be about.
 - c. You can also use the guiding questions on the powerpoint or the Google Slide.
2. Next, read the story to the students. Just have them listen for the first time. * I would take away the picture and have them listen only and focus on the story.
3. After you read the story, give the students time to discuss the story and what they understand about it.

4. Now you can put the image back up on the screen and ask the students to analyze the image one more time, but this time they are looking for details that they missed the first or the students are clarifying information that they saw before but understand more now that they heard the story.

Next hand out the plot charts for this story. One for each student.

1. Independently, give the students about 5 minutes to see if they can identify the narrative elements of the story. After about 5 minutes, let the students work with a partner or at their table group.
 - a. At the end of this all students should have the plot chart completed.
2. As a final activity for this lesson, ask the students to identify potential themes for the story. *This is on the plot chart, but it is good for the students to hear what their peers think as well.
 - a. Go a quick whip around where the students quickly give their idea for the theme. Record the theme ideas that the students come up with.

Day 3 (40-45 minutes)

1. Today the students are going to do a condense version from day 2. The focus of today will be stories 2 + 3.
2. Today it table groups or partners, the students are going to analyze the paintings and stories for 2+3.
 - a. Show the cave painting for each one and ask the students:
 - i. First, what do you notice in the picture?
 - ii. Details? Characters? Animals? Colors?
 - iii. What story do you think this drawing could be telling?
 - b. The students should be sharing at table groups. I typically ask each table group to share one item that they notice or something that could be important.
 - c. Next, read the story to the students.
 - d. Show the image to the students again and ask them to discuss the following at their table groups:
 - i. Theme? Characteristics?
 - ii. What did you think of the story?
 - iii. Does it appeal to you?
 1. Logic? Emotion? Ethics?
 - iv. What do you notice about the image now that you have heard the story?
 - e. Do this for for both story 2 and 3.

Day 4 (40-45 minutes)

1. Students pick a cave painting from the Powerpoint/Google Slides presentation that interests them. (~20-25 minutes)
 - a. First, the students are going to record everything that they notice about the painting from large pieces of information to the small details (all of this will help give them ideas about the image that can aide in their writing). This is similar to what you might have done on Day 2 when analyzing the first cave painting (about the deer).
 - b. Have the students get into groups of 3 with people who are **not** using the same cave painting as they are.
 - c. Students are going to share out what they found or noticed in their cave paintings. The students will be showing the image or the other students while they are sharing out. The two students listening will help give them ideas, and then the group will trade.

2. When each group is finished, the students will be asked to individually pick a theme/idea or a lesson that their story will tell. Once the students have decided this, each student can pick up their plot chart. (~20 minutes)
 - a. The plot chart will help students get their ideas out there and have a path for their story. They will have to consider all parts of a narrative story (exposition, rising action, complications/problems, Climax, falling action, resolution) when creating their plot chart.
 - b. The plot chart should be detailed. Any student or teacher who reads the plot chart should be able to understand the plot, the narrative, and the theme.
 - c. If students finish early, they can trade with a peer to share ideas and finalize any thoughts.

Day 5 (40-45 minutes)

1. Students write a rough draft of their essay based off of the plot chart that was completed during day 4. *This could be a good time to walk around and check-in with students about their story and their plot chart if you did not the day before.

After Lesson Activities

Peer-review based on rubrics

Student-teacher conference (online or in person)

Student revisions

Final copy

Students use an online format to create an audio or oral telling of their story. They can add images if they chose. They can use WeVideo, Powtoons, or another format.

Assessment

Based on rubrics, teacher will assess final work.

Student will publish their oral story or video as their final piece.

Prince Mahasattva Fed Tigers with His Flesh

THE BUDDHA SAID: In ancient times, a king had three sons: the eldest was named Mahapara, the elder Mahadeva, and the youngest was called Mahasattva.

Once the king went sightseeing and hunting in a forest out of the town accompanied by his three sons. When they were in the deep mountains, the king took a rest in a bamboo grove while the sons continued on. A short while later, they came across a tigress with seven cubs lying on the road. The babies were several days old. The tigress was apparently on the verge of death because she could not find any food.

"The tigress could not go and search for food with her babies around," said the eldest prince, "perhaps she would eat them if she could not bear the hunger."

The elder prince said, "It is a pity that the tigress and her babies will be starved to death soon. How could we do anything to save them?"

Hearing his brothers' words, the youngest prince thought, "Since the time I was born, I have wasted my life for thousands of times in the samsara of life and death without any benefit. Today, why shouldn't I sacrifice myself to save the tigers?"

The princes talked besides the tigers for a long time before going on. They could not find any way to help the tigers.

While talking, Mahasattva thought, "If I abandon this life for the good of the deed, I will become a ship to carry all living creatures across the sea of the life and death. Giving up this life, I will escape countless ulcers and diseases and avoid thousands of terrors and difficulties. Otherwise I would stink and fall and become disgusting. So I should give up this life in order to achieve the perfect nirvana and be immune to bitterness and sorrow. If I could get the Buddhist wisdom, I would bestow my wisdom on everyone and make them happy for ever."

When he thought of this, Mahasattva grew very excited and encouraged greatly too. He was filled with the wish of great mercy and determined to feed the tigers with his own flesh. But fearing that his brothers might stop him, he had to send them away first, so he said, "Please go back first brothers, and I will return afterwards."

The elder brothers went back, and the youngest came back to where the tigers were. Then, taking off his clothes and hanging them on a tree, he laid himself beside the tigers. But the tigers dared not eat him.

Realizing that the tigers dared not eat him, the prince climbed up and jumped down from a cliff, but the tigers would not eat him either. When he found that the tigers were too feeble to move, he picked up a sharp bamboo stick and cut his throat, so that the blood gushed out and the tigers could suck in.

At this moment, the earth quaked for six times, just like the waves blown up by the wild winds. The sun lost its brilliance as if being covered up by Asura (a god in the ancient Indian myth said to be often against the emperor of the heaven and to be able to cover up the heaven and the sun with his hands.) Soon, flowers rained down from the heavens. All the kings and deities in the heavens praised the prince's kindness.

The hungry tigers smelled the blood and began to suck it. Then they gained some strength and ate all the flesh of the Prince.

The elder two brothers waited for a long time and felt worried, so they came back to look for their younger brother. When they came to where the tigers had been, they only saw a heap of bones. The brothers grieved at the terrible site, they threw themselves onto the remains of their brother and cried until they feel unconscious. It was very long before they came to and hurried back to tell the bad news.

At the time the prince was being eaten by the tigers, the queen was having her nap in the palace. She dreamed of inauspicious things. The queen suddenly woke up from her dreams.

At this moment, a maid heard the bad news and came into the palace to inform the queen. The queen was greatly worried and went to see the king with tears in her eyes.

"How bitter it is!" exclaimed the king when he heard the news. "How couldn't he be found?" Then he turned to the queen and said, "You go back first and don't grieve at it. I will order the ministers and people to look for him."

After a short while, a minister came back and told the king that they only found the elder two princes.

Immediately after that, another minister and the two princes came back and told everything that had happened.

The king and queen could not control their griefs and sorrows over their son's death. They rode to where Mahasattva gave up his life. When they saw their son's bones, they were overcome with grief and fell senseless.

The attendants immediately pure water on the king and queen and the old couple gradually regained their consciousness. The queen, with hair dispelled, rolled on the ground sorrowfully over her son's death, just like a fish falling on the ground.

After that, the king had the prince's remains piled up and burnt right there. Then a stupa was built up there. Since then, the king and queen and the people often came there to worship.

from Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo, Vol. 3, p. 332

Translated by Li Yuliang

A Man Betrayed the Nine Colored Deer Who Had Saved His Life

ONCE UPON A TIME, there was a deer king who was a previous incarnation of bodhisattva. The deer had nine beautiful and glistening colors on his skin and pair of snow - white antlers. He often strolled along the bank of the Ganges, grazing the rich grass. Crows were his good friends. Once there was a flood and a man was drifted down among the waves. He heard him crying, "Help! Help! All the deities on and above the earth, have pity on me!"

The deer saw that the man was holding a log, struggling and crying and was going to be drowned, he jumped into the water in spite of everything. He cleaved through the waves, swam over to the man and told him, "Don't be afraid! Ride on my back, hold my antlers fast and I will carry you out."

When they climbed on the bank, the deer was already exhausted and lay on the bank for a rest.

The man alighted, walked three rounds around the deer and then bowed before him. "Please accept me as your servant, savior," he said, "and I will serve you all my life."

"Go back to where you are from," said the deer. "I have no use for you here. If you want to repay me, never tell anyone where I am. People are greedy for my beautiful skin and antlers. If they knew where I am, they would surely come and hurt me."

The man remembered what the deer had told him and bid farewell.

At this time, the queen of the kingdom, in which the man lived, dreamt of the nine-colored deer one night. She saw the deer's beautiful skin and his snow-white antlers and like them very much. Since then, she pretended to be sick and lay in bed. The king did not know what had happened to her and came to inquire about it. He asked the queen, "Why are you lying in the bed the whole day?"

"I saw a beautiful deer in my dream," she told the king. "He has nine beautiful colors on the skin and a pair of snow-white antlers. I want his skin to make a nice mattress with and his antlers to make the handle of my whisk. Your majesty should catch that deer for me; otherwise I will die."

"Don't worry about it," the king told her. "I am king of the kingdom and what can't I get?"

The king immediately ordered the whole country: "Whoever is able to catch the nine-colored deer, I will share my land with him. I will grant him gold bowls filled with silver grains and silver bowls filled with gold grains."

When the man heard this order, evil ideas rose in his mind. "If I tell where the deer is," he thought, "I will be as rich and noble as the king. The nine-colored deer is only an animal. What does it matter whether he is alive or not?"

So he told the king's messenger that he could tell where the deer was living. The king's messenger brought the man before the king. When the man told the king he knew where the deer was, sores appeared on and covered his face.

"Though this deer is an animal," the man told the king, "he has great magical power, so Your Majesty should send many people to go with me and only then can he be captured."

The king immediately detached his troops to accompany the man to the river bank. This was seen by a crow and it doubted that they were coming to catch the deer, so it shouted aloud, "Hurry up, my friend! The king is coming to catch you!"

But the deer was fast asleep, so the crow cried in vain. Seeing that the king's troops were approaching, it flew down on the deer's antlers and shouted more loudly, "Hurry up my friend! The King's troops are coming to arrest you."

This time the deer woke up from his sleep. He looked around and saw that he was already surrounded by the soldiers. Realizing that there was no way to escape, the deer went toward the king's troops. The soldiers drew their bows and were about to shoot when the deer opened his mouth, "Don't kill me," he said, "I want to see your king and I have something to tell him."

The king heard these words and ordered his soldiers to put down their bows and arrows. Then the deer said to the king, "Your Majesty, please spare my life first. I have done a great favor for our country."

"What favor?" asked the king.

"A few days ago I saved one of your people," the deer said. Then he knelt before the king and asked, "Who told you that I am here?"

The king pointed at the sore-covered man and told the deer that it was he who had told him about his whereabouts.

The nine colored deer looked at the man and tears rolled down his face. "Your majesty," he told the king, "a few days ago, it was that man who almost drowned by flood and was saved by me. He swore that he would not tell where I live, but he now has gone back on his promise. If I had known he would tell my presence, I would have carried ashore the log he was holding."

When the king had heard the deer's grievances, he felt angry and ashamed. He approached the man on the spot and then set the deer free. When he returned to the capital, he issued an order throughout the country: "From now on, whoever chases the nine colored deer will be severely punished and his kinsmen will be killed too."

The man went home. He festered all over and stank in the mouth. He died not long after that. The queen, having failed to get what she wanted, died of shame, too.

From then on, throngs of deer came to the country. They strolled in the fields and grazed the rich grass. There were favorable climates and abundant harvests of all food crops all over the land. People were free with disease and disasters. They were working in contentment and peace.

from Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo, Vol. 3, p. 452

Translated by Li Yuliang

Queen Vaidehi

The queen and king really want a son, but the king heard a prophecy that stated that only when a certain holy man dies they will get a son. This specific holy man was a hermit. So the king sent a letter to a this hermit, saying please kill yourself. The hermit says that he is not ready to go yet, I would rather stay a little longer. When the messengers come back and tell the king, he does not like this answer, so he decides to expedite it for the hermit. So the king sends someone to kill the hermit. Now that the hermit is dead, the queen immediately becomes pregnant, and she has a son. The king and queen are happy.

Unfortunately, the king hears another prophecy stating that since you engaged in evil actions, your son is now going to imprison you. The son will lead to your downfall. The king decides that he will take care of that. He grabs his son, marches to the tallest tower, and throws his son off of it. However, only his pinky finger is hurt. The king realizes that there is not much he can do and hopes that the prophecy is wrong.

The son grows up and has had enough of his father and imprisons him. He states that no one can help his father or feed him. The Queen is distraught, so she tries to sneak food to the king. However, she is caught, and the prince decides that this is enough and throws his mom in jail. The queen is now questioning what she did in another life to deserve this fate, she calls to the Buddha. The Buddha leads her to a series of 16 contemplations that will her lead to the pure land. The queen focuses and visualizes through the 16 pools

of contemplation and at the end of this entire process, she visualizes the Buddha and she reaches the pure land.

Recorded version from Julia (guide) at The Getty

Cave Drawings Plot Chart

Cave #:
Theme:

Event #3:

Climax: (most suspenseful moment)

Event #2:

Event #1:

Event #1:

Event #2:

Conflict: What is the main problem?

Rising Action: What events make the conflict worse?

Falling Action: How do they start to fix the main conflict?

Exposition:
Characters (who/background) &
Setting (where and when)

Resolution: How was the main conflict resolved?

