

## Interactions Along the Silk Road

Lori Stubben

### **GRADE LEVEL**

6<sup>th</sup> grade Integrated Language Arts/History/Arts

### **Organizing Questions**

1. Who were some of the historical figures and types of people traveling along the Silk Road?
2. Why do people travel? What were the motivations of the people traveling on the Silk Road? What items did they trade that came from their home environment, but were not available where they were trading?
3. What were some of the routes on the Silk Roads at different time periods? What were the conditions like and why?
4. What are some differences and similarities between the Han, Tang, Song and Yuan Dynasties, capitals, and their relationships to the Silk Roads?

### **Introduction**

Students have learned the basic beliefs and practices of Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism and Islam earlier in the year and China unit. They have heard of some of the historical characters and have a general understanding of Chinese Dynasty's history from the three weeks prior in their China unit. They have gone over the basic Silk Road route map and are familiar with some of the ancient names of different areas, peoples and cities.

Today they will take on the role of an historical figure on the Silk Roads. They'll interact with others on the road and find out each other's roles, goods and motivations.

### **Objectives**

1. Students will read, decipher and write the names, dates, home kingdom, languages, religion, occupation, lodging and motivations of their character on their passport.

2. Students will note routes their character took on a map and compare that with other students.
3. Students will see and hear the difference between Han, Tang, Song/Mongol Empire and Yuan dynasties leaders, capitals and overland and maritime travel available on the Silk Roads
4. Students will interact with each other as their characters
5. Students will create a passport, choose goods, make up questions for themselves, chart their character's route, create a dialogue between two characters and write notes about other's dialogues.

### **Materials**

1. character printout one sided so it can be cut apart (advanced students who wish to can take information about characters photocopied from the book Life Along the Silk Road by Susan Whitfield for the Tang Dynasty Portion)
2. character passport and questions worksheet- class set plus example
3. map- class set plus example
4. blank paper for dialogue class set plus example
5. map of Silk Road on wall
6. stopwatch

### **Equipment**

Computer, document camera (or just pass around teacher's passport), projector

### **Teacher Preparation**

Print out materials, cut apart character pages

### **Time**

Two days 60 minute periods

## **Procedures**

1. Introduce the idea of the silk road with silk being found in an Egyptian tomb 1000BCE and it was made in China at that time so it must have traveled on the silk roads. Sometimes travel was safer than other times because of alliances or lack of war in Asia. When traveling one needs a passport- some identification and permission to travel. (Show the teacher's passport on the projector.) Ask students: what information does it contain? Who in class has a passport? (Show the Mongolian passport- from the Mongol Empire on the first slide of the PowerPoint).
2. Begin by passing out character sheets and Silk Road Passports for each student.
3. Instruct students on how to fill out their Silk Road Passports with an example on the document camera. Students are to fill this out according to their character's biography from the photocopy or an additional web search (they can also use their imagination for some parts and other sources). At a higher level this could be done with the partial or full information on the 13 characters from the *Life along the Silk Road* by Susan Whitfield- edited for grade appropriate content.
4. Circulate and assist with filling out the paperwork and answer questions. Show the slide about Goods Traded to help students figure out what they may have or want- talk about how religions were moving at different time periods as well as clothing and art styles, languages, science, medicine, technology and genetics.
5. Model how to create questions about one's self and general questions about someone they may be meeting when traveling on the Silk Road. Students create 3 questions they could be asked and 3 general questions for anyone they meet and 1 extension question in the question section of their worksheet.
6. Pass out maps and figure out character's starting point and routes according to the character sheet and logic. (This should take up the time for the first day's lesson or possibly there will be time for step 6 or 7). Figure out from

the date listed on the biography what dynasty/empire the character would be interacting in. Dynasty dates are listed on the board/poster

7. Set the scene for the first interactions in the Han Dynasty by showing the next slide about Chang'an. Explain that they may have been on their journey for years, months or just setting out and in reality this city may not have been on every character's exact route, but for the imagination sake we will all be participating as best as we can.
8. As a demonstration choose two gregarious students to model an interaction on the Silk Road with each other from this group. They ride their camel, dismount, meet, greet, ask about each other and answer questions as best as they can. They show each other their maps explaining where they have come from or where they are going. Side coach the students to keep the conversation going being imaginative, but also accurate, as best as they can with what they know about their character. Also coach how to take notes about this interaction.
9. Advance power point to introduce the Tang Dynasty and then identify who was alive during the Tang Dynasty, as those student's characters have 3 minutes for an interaction with one other student. They are to carry their passport with them at all times and while pantomiming riding their camel, call for them to dismount and reach their arm out to the closest person within arm's reach and that is their first interaction partner. Those not in the Tang Dynasty are to find a pair interacting and write notes about what they overhear- who, what, questions, etc. Set the timer for 3 minutes then have them get on their camel and have a second interaction. Then all take a seat.
10. Next is the Song Dynasty – set the scene with the power point and give those student's characters 3 minutes for their interaction. Those not in this dynasty are to write notes about what they overhear .Set the timer for 3 minutes then have them get on their camel and have a second interaction. Then all take a seat.
11. Move on to the Yuan Dynasty. Show pictures of the size of the Dynasty and explain the expansion of the maritime routes. The capital moved to Beijing where the Mongol Emperors ruled over the great Mongol Empire and allowed trade to flow. Remaining students are in the Yuan Dynasty they will interact on additional sea routes. Students will either ride their animal or a

ship and dismount/disembark into Beijing to interact with other characters for 3 minutes- sharing information, questions and maps. Characters not in this time period will write down who and what they see. Have them switch partners for an additional three minutes.

Extension if time or the next day: After their interaction, they should find a good interaction partner from their same time period and write two pages of dialogue in play style as they remember (and improve) from their most fruitful interaction of the day. 10-15 minutes. Collect.

12. Class discussion: Did you meet anyone similar to you? In what ways, different? Class? Women? Religions? What were common motivations for traveling on the silk road? What problems did our character encounter? How is this relatable to different people meeting today- what parallel to modern life can we find? What was surprising?

13. Last slide- Belt and Road, explain the connection between the ancient Silk Road and today's

### **Assessment**

1. Observation of participation and engagement
2. Collect and review paperwork

## Historic Characters on the Silk Road-4 dynasties

### Han Dynasty 4 characters:

**138BCE-116BCE. Zhang Qian** Chinese general and envoy credited with opening the Silk Road after his mission from the Han Emperor Wudi to recruit the Yueh-chih people to form an alliance against the Xiongnu. First trip (138-125) skirted the Taklamakan desert via the northern route, passed the Pamir, then reached Ferghana. Returned via the southern route. His second trip (119-115), a mission to seek alliance with Wu-sun people, took him to Dunhuang, Loulan, Kucha, then the capital of Wu-sun kingdom in the Ili river. His missions to the west led to the formalization of trade, especially the silk trade,



between China and Persia.

**50 BCE-31 BCE Wang Zhaojun** was born to a prominent family of Hubei Province. She was also adept in [pipa](#) and master of all the Four Arts of the Chinese Scholar: zither playing, go mastery, calligraphy and Chinese painting. In 36 BC, Emperor Yuan of Han chose his concubines from the whole state. Because of Wang's fame in the county, she was his first choice for the concubine from her county. According to the custom in the palace, when choosing a new wife, the Emperor was first presented with portraits of all the candidate women. It is said that because of Wang's confidence of beauty and temperament, she refused to bribe the artist Mao Yanshou as the other maids did. As a reprisal, Mao Yanshou painted a mole of widowed tears on Wang's portrait. As a result, during her time in the Lateral Courts, Wang Zhaojun was never visited by the Emperor and remained as a palace lady-in-waiting. Wang Zhaojun's portrait was either never viewed by the Emperor or was not in its true form, and therefore the Emperor overlooked her. In 33 BCE, Huhanye Chanyu visited Chang'an as part of the tributary system that existed between the Han and Xiongnu governments. Typically the daughter of a concubine would then be offered, but unwilling to honor Huhanye with a real princess, Emperor Yuan ordered that the plainest girl in the harem be selected. He asked for volunteers and promised to present her as his own daughter. The idea of leaving their homeland and comfortable life at court for the grasslands of the far and unknown north was abhorrent to most of the young women, but Wang Zhaojun accepted. When the matron of the harem sent her unflattering portrait to the Emperor, he merely glanced at it and nodded his approval. Only when summoned to court was Wang Zhaojun's beauty revealed. The Emperor considered retracting his decision, but it was too late by then, and he regretfully presented Wang Zhaojun to

Huhanye, who was delighted. Relations with the Xiongnu subsequently improved, and artist Mao Yanshou was subsequently executed for deceiving the Emperor.



**32CE-102. Ban Chao (Pan Ch'ao).** Chinese general restoring the Tarim basin under Han's power and maintaining whole control of the area as west as Kashgar during his career there. He sent out emissaries to the area west and beyond the Tarim basin, including the area of modern-day



Iran and the Persian Gulf.



**97 Gan Ying (Kan Ying).** First Chinese envoy to Ta-Ts'in (the Roman Orient) sent by general Ban Chao from Kashgaria in 97 AD. Journeyed through the Pamir mountains, Parthia, and reached as far as the the coast of the Persian Gulf, where he heard descriptions of Romans. The first known Chinese visited the Middle East as west as T'iao-chih, near the present Nedjef, Iraq.

#### The Tang dynasty (618-907) 8 historical Characters



**624-705 Wu Zetian** was the only female ruler of China. Wu was a strong believer in Buddhism and used many different Buddhist scriptures to justify her ruling which was frowned upon according to Confucian and Daoism beliefs at the time. In order to promote Buddhism as a state religion, she would erect many grand visual representations of the Buddha, including the Grand Vairocana Buddha, a massive statue completely carved out of limestone in the largest cave at Longmen, near her capital. These huge sites were used to alert the public of the coming dominance of Buddhism during her reign. With the public aware of a new and growing religion, many scholarly exchanges between the East and West of Asia would help to create a widespread awareness of Buddhism, thus helping to introduce a new belief to the region.





**628-680 Princess Wencheng** of the Tang Dynasty was a lesser princess of that region who was well educated, intelligent, and beautiful. The Chinese emperor at the time, Taitsung of Tang Li Shimin, offered her as a bride to King Gampo of Tibet. In doing so, they were able to establish a secure path along the south side of the Silk Road as well as spread Buddhism and agriculture to the Tibetan area. Two views of Wencheng emerged after the marriage and later on in history. From the Chinese point of view, she was a “diplomat bride”, used to bring the Han Chinese culture out to the rest of Asia and the world as they knew it. According to the Tibetan perspective, she was a “savior” of the culture, bringing a modern advance to their previously backward culture. If it wasn’t for Wencheng’s marriage, political links between China and Tibet as well as safe passage along the southern portion of the Silk Road would’ve been nonexistent.

**629-645. Xuan Zang (Hsuan-tsang).** Chinese Buddhist monk and translator traveling across the Tarim basin via the northern route, Turfan, Kucha, Tashkent, Samarkand, Bactria, then over the Kindu Kush to India. Returned via the southern route. He spent his remaining life translating sutras into Chinese. His travel and story became fantastic legends which were used in plays and novels, such as Wu Ch'eng-en's famous novel in the 16th century, *Journey to the*



*West.*



**650-6511 Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas** a maternal uncle to the Prophet Muhammad, diplomat and missionary. The introduction of Islam in China began during the reign of Emperor Gaozong (r. 649–683). Starting in Mecca he was the third person to hear Mohammed's message from Allah. He brought the news to Kufa, Iraq and after battling the Sassanid Army there became the governor. After establishing the first mosque in Bangladesh he was the first Moslem to visit Emperor Gaozong in Chang'an.

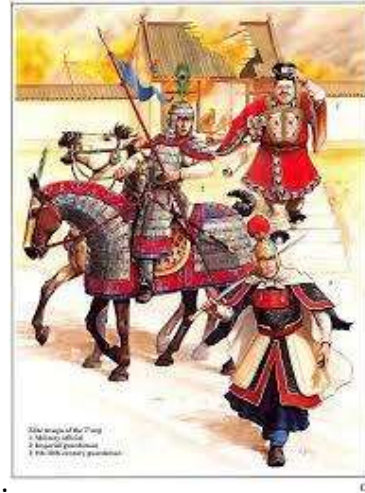
**713-741. Hwi Chao.** Korean monk but grew up in China. Traveled to India via sea route. Lived there for several years and visited various Buddhist kingdoms in India, Persia and Afghanistan. On the returning journey, traveled to Kashmir, Kabul, passed the Pamirs and entered Xinjiang from Tashkurgan, then skirted around the Taklamakan desert from the northern towns, Kucha, Turfan and Hami. His account *The Record to Five Indian Kingdoms* provided valuable information on the Islamic and Buddhist distribution among the Central Asian kingdoms during the 8th century. His book had been lost since Tang dynasty until an incomplete copy (14 pages, ~6000 words) was miraculously discovered by the French explorer, Paul Pelliot at Dunhuang



cave in 1908.

**751 - 762 Du Hwai.** Chinese soldier defeated and imprisoned by the Arabs at the famous battle of Talas in 751. Stayed in the prison camp for ten long years and traveled to Tashkent, Samarkand, passed northern Iran to Iraq, west into Syria. On the Perisan Gulf, he boarded a

foreign ship, returned to Canton via Indian Ocean and South China Sea. His book is a personal



account of Talas battle and his prison life in Central Asia.



**750-789 Wukong (Wu-K'ung).** Chinese monk went as a delegation with the ambassador from Samarkand who was returning home. He fell ill there and could not return with his countrymen. On his recovery he became a monk and lived in Gandhara and Kashmir, not returning to China until 790

**821. Tamim ibn Bahr.** A Muslim traveller who left a record of his visit to the Uyghur capital of Khara-balghasun in the present-day Mongolia. He was an ambassador from the Samanid

Empire, Persia. (There are no drawings of him specifically; these are just from the same place



and time period.)

**Song Dynasty 960-**

**10 Historical Characters (10 additional in Life along the Silk Road book)**

**1202–1280 Enni Ben'en** a [Japanese Buddhist](#) monk. He started his Buddhist training as a monk. While he was studying a vision of [Sugawara no Michizane](#) appeared to him in a dream and told him to go to China and study meditation. Following this vision, he met a teacher [Wuzhun Shifan](#) in China, and studied with him.<sup>[1]</sup> When he returned to Japan, he founded [Tōfukujji](#) monastery in [Kyoto](#), and practiced [Zen](#) as well as other types of Buddhism. He is the possible author of *Zazen Ron* (Treatise on Seated Meditation). It is a brief text, composed of 24

questions and answers. It is believed that he was the first to bring [udon](#) noodles to Japan from



China.



**1219-1225. Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai.** Great Kitan statesman and poet who became advisor to Genghis Khan and his successors. Traveled with Genghis Khan and his army to Central Asia in 1219. Journeyed to Altai, Ili valley, Talas, Samarkand, Buhara. His impression on the prosperous Buhara can be read on some of his poems. Returned via Tienshan, Urumqi, Turfan, and Hami. He wrote a travel book *Xi Yue Lu* in Chinese.

**1245-1247, 1249-1251. Andrew of Longjumeau.** He led a mission dispatched to the Mongols by [Pope Innocent IV](#). He left [Lyon](#), France in the spring of 1245 for the Middle East. He visited Muslims in [Syria](#) and Christian churches in Persia, finally delivering the papal letters to a Mongol general near [Tabriz](#), Iran. After returning to France he set off again with letters from King Louis and rich presents including a chapel-tent lined with scarlet cloth and embroidered with sacred pictures. From Cyprus they went to the port of [Antioch](#) in Syria, and thence traveled for a year to the Khan's court. Their route led them through [Persia](#), along the southern and eastern shores of the [Caspian Sea](#). On arrival at the supreme Mongol court –at [Karakorum](#) the Mongol capital itself, south-west of [Lake Baikal](#) – Andrew found Güyük Khan dead, poisoned. The regent-

mother [Oghul Qaimish](#) seems to have received and dismissed him with presents and a dismissive letter for Louis IX , he witnessed [Möngke](#), Güyük's successor, had been elected.



**1221-1224. K'iu Ch'ang Ch'un** An eminent Taoist monk born in 1148 CE and thus elderly at the time of his trip, Ch'ang Ch'un was ordered by Chingis Khan to travel to his court. The route went through the Altai and Tianshan mountains, the southern parts of today's Kazakhstan, through Kyrgyzstan, to Samarkand and then down into NE Iran and Afghanistan. He was accompanied



by Li Chi ch'ang,



**1250 Jamal al-Din** Persian Astronomer (Zhamaluding in Chinese) from Bukhara worked for Kublai setting up the Islamic astronomy bureau in Beijing to check Chinese observations and predictions.



**1247 and 1254 Sempad the Constable** diplomat head of Armed forces of Armenia brother of King and chief negotiator for Mongols not to attack Armenia- submitted as a vassal state

**1253-1255. William (Guillaume/Willem) of Rubruck (Ruysbroeck).** Franciscan missionary from Flanders who traveled through the Black Sea and the territories of the Golden Horde to the court of the Great Khan Möngke at Karakorum. His account is "a mine of varied information about the Asiatic life of his times". It contains "the fullest and most authentic information on the Mongol Empire in its pre-Chinese phase" it is of interest for descriptions of encounters with Nestorian Christians. He built a fountain for four liquids (grape wine, mare's milk, honey wine

and rice wine) out of a silver tree with gold angels at the top and lions at the bottom for the



Mongolian capital at Karakorum.

**1254-1255. Hayton I (also, Hethum, Haithon) and Kirakos Gandsaketsi.** King of Little Armenia, Hayton traveled through the Caucasus and territories of Khan Batu to the Great Khan Möngke



in Karakorum and then back via Samarkand, Bukhara and Tabriz.

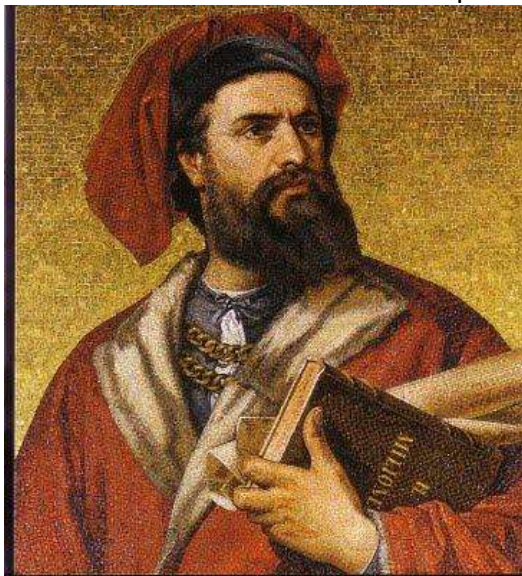




**1260-1269, 1271-1295. Niccolò and Maffeo Polo.** The merchant father and uncle of Marco Polo traveled from the Crimea through the other territories of the Golden Horde to Bukhara and ultimately to the court of Kubilai Khan in North China. Kubilai sent them back to Europe on a mission to the Pope via the overland route; they arrived in Venice in 1269. When they departed again for China in 1271 via the Levant, Anatolia and Persia, they were accompanied by young Marco.

#### The Yuan dynasty (1271–1368)- 6 Historical Characters

**1271-1295. Marco Polo.** The most famous of the Silk Road travelers, who, by his own account, worked for Kubilai Khan. He traveled overland through Persia across the Pamirs and south of the Taklamakan; his return was by sea from China around south Asia to Hormuz, whence he went overland to the Mediterranean. A Venetian, Marco dictated his account to a professional writer of romances while imprisoned by the Genoese on his return. His main associations seem to have been with the Mongol rulers of China and with the Muslim merchant community. Polo's book became well known in Renaissance Europe and served as a stimulus to further travel and



discovery.

**1275-1279. 1287-1288. Rabban Bar Sauma** Nestorian Christian monk who traveled from Tai-tu, Qubilai Khan's northern capital, to the Middle East, via the southern branch of the Silk Road (through Khotan and Kashgar). He traveled with a friend named Markos. Although on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (which they never reached), they seem to have had official sponsorship



from the Khan.

**1279-1328. John of Monte Corvino.** Franciscan missionary, active in Armenia and Persia, and then in India and China. He left Tabriz for India in 1291 and arrived in Beijing probably after the death of Kubilai Khan in 1294. He was elevated to the rank of Archbishop in ca. 1307 and continued to head the Catholic mission there until his death. Although he did not write a travel



narrative, several of his letters have been preserved.

**1316-1330. Odoric of Pordenone.** Franciscan monk who traveled via Constantinople and the Black Sea to Persia, and then via the Indian Ocean to India in the early 1320s. From there he sailed around southeast Asia to the east coast of China and spent several years in Beijing. He apparently traveled overland, arriving back in Venice via the Black Sea and Constantinople. His lengthy travel account, which he dictated in 1330, became a "best seller," in part because of

Odoric's indiscriminate mixture of tall tales with more authentic information.

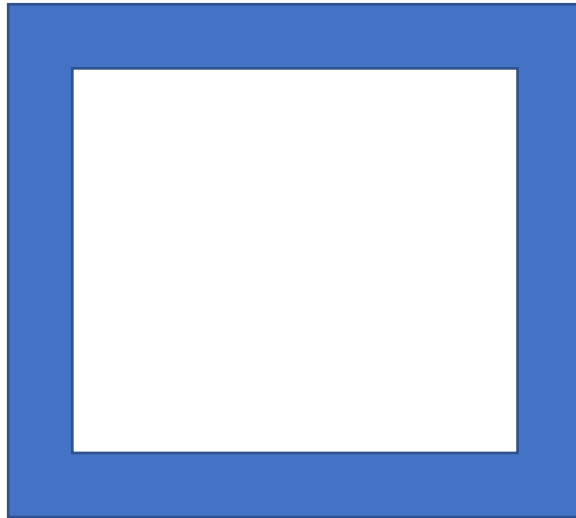


**1325-1354. Ibn Battuta.** A native of Tangier (Morocco), Shams al-Din Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad Ibn Battuta (1304-1368/9 or 1377) is famous for spending the years between 1325 and 1354, when he returned home, traveling across North Africa and through much of Eurasia, all the way to China. His initial goal was to participate in the pilgrimage to Mecca (the hajj).



**1339-1353. John of Marignolli.** Franciscan sent as papal legate to Yüan (Mongol) Emperor of China. Entered the lands of the Golden Horde via the Black Sea. His route probably ran through Urgench (S. of Aral Sea), via Hami (north of the Taklamakan) to Beijing and Shang-tu, where he was received in August 1342. After three years, headed home via ship to Hormuz and then overland to the Levant.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_



**Silk Road Passport**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth/Death or know dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Kingdom: \_\_\_\_\_

Languages spoken: \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Lodging: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for travel: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Goods to declare (what you have to trade from your home kingdom):

\_\_\_\_\_

What you are hoping to get/accomplish:

\_\_\_\_\_

Three thoughtful questions one could ask about you:

Three general questions you could ask about someone you meet on the silk road?

Follow up question ideas: Tell me more about that? What do you think about that?

Overheard conversation notes- where, who, what: