SILK ROAD SIMULATION

Purpose

In this simulation, you will learn how the Silk Roads connected Afro-Eurasian societies through the exchange of goods. The Silk Roads represented one of the first steps toward globalization, economically and culturally tying together communities from different continents and regions. By actively participating as merchants in the Silk Roads simulation, you will witness firsthand how goods and services were moved across regions and discover why individuals took financial and personal risks in order to make a profit. You will also discover how the Silk Roads affected states, economic systems, culture, and innova, and led to an increase in networks of exchange across Afro-Eurasia.

Process

In this activity, you will take part in three rounds of a simulation that should help you better understand the Silk Road and the impact it had on the communities of Afro-Eurasia.

You are going to act like merchants on the Silk Road. Over the course of three rounds, you will engage in trade with different regions to get a better sense of what it was like to be a part of this new, global system. The ultimate goal is for you to try to collect the most technologies, beliefs, and goods that originated outside of your home region.

Before you are assigned a region or goods to trade, your teacher will give you a quick overview of the trading zones and regions that will be involved in the simulation, as well as a preview of the different types of goods that each region has. Make sure to pay attention to this part—you will eventually be trying to trade for goods that other regions have so it's good to preview what you might be trying to trade for. Once you've previewed, get into your regional groups.

Round 1-Within Group Trading

Read Regional Guide Card #1 in your small groups, and take a few minutes to trade. While you can't collect anything from outside your home region for this round, you should be thinking about diversifying what you have so your basic needs are met. After a few minutes of trading, discuss the questions on Regional Guide Card #1. Then, discuss the following questions with your whole class:

- 1. Do you have everything you need to survive?
- 2. Do you have "extras" or luxury goods?

Round 2—Within Group and Next-Door Group Trading

Now, you can trade within your group and with the other group in your trade zone. You are not allowed to trade with groups outside of your trade zone. Your teacher will give you about five minutes for this round of trading. Don't forget to try to get rid of your disease card, if you have one. Once you're done trading, your teacher will hand out Regional Guide Card #2 to you. Read the contents and discuss the questions with your regional group. Then, discuss the following questions with your class:

SILK ROAD SIMULATION

- 1. Do you have everything you need to survive?
- 2. Do you have "extras" or luxury goods?
- 3. Was the trading difficult? Did you have trouble with communication?
- 4. Was it expensive or cheap? Have you been trading one for one, or trying to work out better deals?
- 5. Did you encounter new challenges?
- 6. What new things did you learn about your world?

Round 3—Multi-Regional Trade Using Intermediaries

For this round, trade has expanded and you can now trade with regions that are further away, but you cannot leave your own trade zone and will have to use intermediaries to help you trade (for example, the next-door groups can help with groups that are farther away). It was rare for any merchant to travel the entire Silk Road. Take about five minutes to trade. Once time is up, return to your home region and separate your cards on the table. Count the number of items on your table that did not originate from your home region and write down this number. Then, your teacher will give you Regional Guide Card #3. Take a few minutes to adjust your totals based on the directions on the card and also to answer the questions on the card. Then, discuss the following questions with your class:

- 1. Do you have what you need to survive?
- 2. Do you have "extras" or luxury goods?
- 3. Was it difficult? Did you have trouble with communication?
- 4. Were the goods cheap or expensive?
- 5. Did you encounter new challenges?
- 6. How did empires both help and hinder trading?
- 7. What new things did you learn about your world?

Wrapping Up

Now that the simulation is done, it's time to share your final point totals to see how everyone fared. You'll wrap up one of two ways: Either you'll answer these questions in class or your teacher will have you answer them for homework:

- What is the purpose of passing the disease cards with each exchange?
- How would religions and beliefs actually have been transferred between the regions?
- How did the Silk Road impact states at this time in history?
- How did the Silk Road impact economic systems at this time in history?
- How did the Silk Road impact innovation at this time in history?

SILK ROAD MERCHANTS REGIONAL GUIDE CARDS

China Card #1

Each of you is a merchant in China. Your goal is to ensure that all of your day-to-day needs are met. You'll also take inventory of the resources you have in your home region. Each person in your group should take charge of one type of goods. Additionally, one of you needs to take the disease card and mix it in with your goods cards (later, you will try to secretly trade the disease card away). Then, take a few minutes to trade within your group and try to diversify the goods that you have. Focus on the things you need for survival. Once your teacher says time is up for trading, discuss the following questions with your fellow merchants:

- 1. What goods do you have plenty of?
- 2. What goods are you lacking?
- 3. Why might you want to trade the goods in your hand with others in your group?
- 4. Do you have any goods that are not necessary to sustain life? What are they?

China Card #2

The Chinese emperor has been observing the rising value of silk abroad. He demands that you now pay your taxes in silk. Because of this, most rural women now spend their days at home making silk. This means that you are devoting less time to farming, which feeds your family. Each merchant in your group must discard one food- or goods-related item. This item must be removed from play. Also, any gold that you can acquire will be worth double at the end of the simulation. Discuss the following questions with your group:

- 1. Why might the emperor demand that taxes be paid in silk?
- 2. What potential problems might this cause in the future?
- 3. Other than paying your taxes, how useful might silk be in your day-to-day life?
- 4. What other luxury goods have you acquired?
- 5. Have you encountered any new beliefs or technologies in trading with other groups? How might these affect your view of the world?

China Card #3

Oh no! Your silk-making secrets have spread across Eurasia. That means you'll have to pay more taxes to the government! Subtract one point from your total for any remaining silk your group may have now. Any disease cards also count as -1 from your total. Once you're done tallying your score, discuss the following questions with your group:

- 1. How does this affect your ability to trade?
- 2. How does this affect your family?
- 3. What new beliefs have you encountered in trading with other groups? How might this affect your worldview?
- 4. What new technologies have you encountered in trading with other groups? How might you use that technology to improve your lives?

Central Asia Card #1

Each of you is a merchant in Central Asia. Your goal is to ensure that all of your day-to-day needs are met. You'll also take inventory of the resources you have in your home region. Each person in your group should take charge of one type of goods. Additionally, one of you needs to take the disease card and mix it in with your goods cards (later, you will try to secretly trade the disease card away). Then, take a few minutes to trade within your group and try to diversify the goods that you have. Focus on the things you need for survival. Once your teacher says time is up for trading, discuss the following questions with your fellow merchants:

- 1. What goods do you have plenty of?
- 2. What goods are you lacking?
- 3. Why might you want to trade the goods in your hand with others in your group?
- 4. Do you have any goods that are not necessary to sustain life? What are they?

Central Asia Card #2

Your population is growing, and the number of lands under your control is increasing. You need more food to feed your people, and China seems to have plenty of it! Trade whatever you can to get food and goods from China. Discuss the following questions with your group:

- 1. How might you get food from China?
- 2. What other luxury goods have you acquired?
- 3. Have you encountered any new beliefs or technologies in trading with other groups? How might these affect your view of the world?

Central Asia Card #3

Your lands have now grown into a vast empire, stretching across most of the Silk Road trade routes. You still need to find food for your people. Any food-related cards are now worth double, regardless of where they originated. You also need to enlist the aid of foreigners who can help you administer your empire. Any disease cards count as -1 from your total. Once you are done tallying your score, discuss the following questions with your group:

- 1. How might you get more food for your people?
- 2. What other luxury goods have you acquired?
- 3. What new beliefs have you encountered in trading with other groups? How might this affect your worldview?
- 4. What new technologies have you encountered in trading with other groups? How might you use that technology to improve your lives?

SILK ROAD MERCHANTS REGIONAL GUIDE CARDS

India Card #1

Each of you is a merchant in India. Your goal is to ensure that all of your day-to-day needs are met. You'll also take inventory of what resources you have in your home region. Each person in your group should take charge of one type of goods. Additionally, one of you needs to take the disease card and mix it in with your goods cards (later, you will try to secretly trade the disease card away). Then, take a few minutes to trade within your group and try to diversify the goods that you have. Focus on the things you need for survival. Once your teacher says time is up for trading, discuss the following questions with your fellow merchants:

- 1. What goods do you have plenty of?
- 2. What goods are you lacking?
- 3. Why might you want to trade the goods in your hand with others in your group?
- 4. Do you have any goods that are not necessary to sustain life? What are they?

India Card #2

Your population is increasing, and there are more lands coming under your control. You must get more food for your people. Discuss the following questions with your group:

- 1. How might you get more food for your people?
- 2. What other luxury goods have you acquired?
- 3. Have you encountered any new beliefs or technologies in trading with other groups? How might these affect your view of the world?

India Card #3

Your people now live in a powerful empire that was created as a result of increased trade and population growth. Your leaders have decided to build Buddhist monasteries across the trade routes to increase your influence abroad. Any religion cards your group holds are now worth double, as long as they came from outside your home region. Any disease cards also count as -1 from your total. Once you are done tallying your score, discuss the following questions with your group:

- How might the spread of religion affect other communities across the Silk Road trade routes?
- 2. What new beliefs have you encountered in trading with other groups? How might this affect your worldview?
- 3. What new technologies have you encountered in trading with other groups? How might you use that technology to improve your lives?

Persia Card #1

Each of you is a merchant in Persia. Your goal is to ensure that all of your day-to-day needs are met. You'll also take inventory of the resources you have in your home region. Each person in your group should take charge of one type of goods. Additionally, one of you needs to take the disease card and mix it in with your goods cards (later, you will try to secretly trade the disease card away). Then, take a few minutes to trade within your group and try to diversify the goods that you have. Focus on the things you need for survival. Once your teacher says time is up for trading, discuss the following questions with your fellow merchants:

- 1. What goods do you have plenty of?
- 2. What goods are you lacking?
- 3. Why might you want to trade the goods in your hand with others in your group?
- 4. Do you have any goods that are not necessary to sustain life? What are they?

Persia Card #2

You are positioned well on the trade routes. For this next round of trading, you should be able to act as a middleman between other regions. Try to get the best deals you can, because other regions want the products you are trading! Discuss the following questions with your group:

- 1. What is the best way to get better trade deals for yourself, as well as act as an intermediary between other regions?
- 2. What other luxury goods have you acquired?
- 3. Have you encountered any new beliefs or technologies in trading with other groups? How might these affect your view of the world?

Persia Card #3

The Byzantines and Arabians are relying on you more and more to provide them with luxury goods from China. Any luxury goods you have (not technologies or beliefs) are now worth double, as long as they originated from outside your lands. Any disease cards also count as -1 from your total. Once you are done tallying your score, discuss the following questions as a group:

- 1. Why might regions desire luxury goods from faraway lands?
- 2. What are some benefits of being a middleman along the trade routes?
- 3. What new beliefs have you encountered in trading with other groups? How might this affect your worldview?
- 4. What new technologies have you encountered in trading with other groups? How might you use that technology to improve your lives?

SILK ROAD MERCHANTS REGIONAL GUIDE CARDS

Arabia Card #1

Each of you is a merchant in Arabia. Your goal is to ensure that all of your day-to-day needs are met. You'll also take inventory of the resources you have in your home region. Each person in your group should take charge of one type of goods. Additionally, one of you needs to take the disease card and mix it in with your goods cards (later, you will try to secretly trade the disease card away). Then, take a few minutes to trade within your group and try to diversify the goods that you have. Focus on the things you need for survival. Once your teacher says time is up for trading, discuss the following questions with your fellow merchants:

- 1. What goods do you have plenty of?
- 2. What goods are you lacking?
- 3. Why might you want to trade the goods in your hand with others in your group?
- 4. Do you have any goods that are not necessary to sustain life? What are they?

Arabia Card #2

Your technologies and belief systems are starting to take root in other regions along the trade routes. Discuss the following questions with your group:

- 1. What might be some of the benefits of having your culture spread across Eurasia?
- 2. What other luxury goods have you acquired?
- 3. Have you encountered any new beliefs or technologies in trading with other groups? How might these affect your view of the world?

Arabia Card #3

Your cities are beginning to prosper, and followers of Islam abroad are making the pilgrimage to Mecca. Any belief cards you now have are worth double, regardless of where they originated. Any disease cards also count as -1 from your total. Once you are done tallying your score, discuss the following questions with your group:

- 1. How might the spread of Islam benefit your growing empire?
- 2. What new beliefs have you encountered in trading with other groups? How might this affect your worldview?
- 3. What new technologies have you encountered in trading with other groups? How might you use that technology to improve your lives?

Byzantium Card #1

Each of you is a merchant in Byzantium. Your goal is to ensure that all of your day-to-day needs are met. You'll also take inventory of the resources you have in your home region. Each person in your group should take charge of one type of goods. Additionally, one of you needs to take the disease card and mix it in with your goods cards (later, you will try to secretly trade the disease card away). Then, take a few minutes to trade within your group and try to diversify the goods that you have. Focus on the things you need for survival. Once your teacher says time is up for trading, discuss the following questions with your fellow merchants:

- 1. What goods do you have plenty of?
- 2. What goods are you lacking?
- 3. Why might you want to trade the goods in your hand with others in your group?
- 4. Do you have any goods that are not necessary to sustain life? What are they?

Byzantium Card #2

Rumors of your glass-making techniques and wealth are beginning to circulate along the trade routes. China is particularly interested in acquiring your gold, so any silk you can acquire will be worth double at the end of the simulation. Discuss the following questions as a group:

- 1. How can you acquire more silk from China if you can't trade directly with them?
- 2. What other luxury goods have you acquired?
- 3. Have you encountered any new beliefs or technologies in trading with other groups? How might these affect your view of the world?

Byzantium Card #3

Your region has expanded its influence across the Mediterranean Sea, but your wealth has made your empire a target for foreign invasions. Any remaining gold now counts -1 against your total. The introduction of silk into your region has changed the way upper-class members of your community dress, especially women. Remember that any silk you have now counts as double. Any disease cards also count as -1 from your total. Once you are done tallying your score, discuss the following questions with your group:

- 1. What problems might arise from being a prosperous empire?
- 2. How might a material such as silk change the way communities view modes of dress and behavior?
- 3. What new beliefs have you encountered in trading with other groups? How might this affect your worldview?
- 4. What new technologies have you encountered in trading with other groups? How might you use that technology to improve your lives?























































































