Name: _____ Date: _____

The Silk Road

Circle group

More than two thousand years ago, trade routes began to link China with the lands around the Mediterranean Sea. We call them the Silk Road. But it was not one road. It was a web of trails, mountain passes, and sea routes. They crossed deserts and mountains. Few people went the whole way. Goods passed from one trader to the next, like a long relay race.

Silk was the most famous good. Farmers in China raised silkworms. They wove the fine thread into cloth. For a long time, no one else knew how to make it. Rich people in faraway lands paid a lot for silk. Traders also carried spices, glass, metal goods, and horses. They brought back things like gold, silver, and cotton.

The trip was hard and dangerous. Lines of camels, called caravans, crossed hot, dry deserts and cold mountain passes. Traders stopped at oasis towns. There they found water, food, and a safe place to sleep. Some of these towns got rich. They sold supplies and charged travelers fees.

The routes carried more than goods. Ideas and beliefs traveled too. Religions such as Buddhism spread along the routes. So did inventions such as papermaking. Travelers shared stories, music, and foods. They also spread diseases. Trade brought people from far places together, so they learned from each other.

Over time, the land routes faded. One reason was that sea routes got easier and cheaper. But the Silk Road shows how trade can connect the world.

Questions

1. Why was the Silk Road not really one road?

_____

_____

2. How did goods get from China to the Mediterranean?

_____

_____

3. Why did silk cost so much?

_____

_____

4. What made the trip dangerous?

_____

_____

5. How did some oasis towns get rich?

_____

_____

6. What else traveled on the Silk Road besides goods?

_____

_____

7. What does the last sentence mean?

_____

_____

Words to know

routes: the paths or roads that travelers follow
relay: a race or job in which one person hands off to the next
caravans: groups of travelers and animals who journey together
oasis: a place in a desert where there is water and plants grow

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Silk Road

Triangle group

More than two thousand years ago, trading routes began to link China with the lands around the Mediterranean Sea. We call them the Silk Road, though it was not one road. It was a web of trails, mountain passes, and sea lanes that crossed deserts and mountains. Few people traveled the whole distance. Instead, goods passed from one trader to the next, like a long relay race.

Silk was the most famous good. Chinese farmers raised silkworms and wove the fine thread into cloth, and for a long time no one else knew how to make it. Rich people in distant lands paid high prices for silk. Traders also carried spices, glass, metal goods, and horses, and they brought back items such as gold, silver, and cotton.

Travel was hard and dangerous. Caravans of camels crossed hot, dry deserts and cold mountain passes. Merchants stopped at oasis towns, where they could find water, food, and a safe place to sleep. Some of these towns grew rich by selling supplies and charging fees to travelers.

The routes carried more than goods. Ideas and beliefs traveled, too. Religions such as Buddhism spread along the routes, and so did inventions such as papermaking. Travelers shared stories, music, and foods, and they also spread diseases. Because trade brought people from distant places together, communities learned from one another.

The land routes faded over time, in part because sea routes became easier and cheaper. But the story of the Silk Road shows how trade can connect the world.

Questions

1. Why is the Silk Road not really one road?

_____

_____

2. How did goods travel from China to the Mediterranean?

_____

_____

3. Why was silk so valuable?

_____

_____

4. What dangers did travelers face?

_____

_____

5. Why did some oasis towns grow rich?

_____

_____

6. Besides goods, what traveled along the Silk Road?

_____

_____

7. What does the last sentence mean?

_____

_____

Words to know

routes: the paths or roads that travelers follow
relay: a race or job in which one person hands off to the next
caravans: groups of travelers and animals who journey together
oasis: a place in a desert where there is water and plants grow
merchants: people who buy and sell goods for a living

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Silk Road

Square group

More than two thousand years ago, a network of trading routes began to connect China with the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. We call this network the Silk Road, although it was never a single road; rather, it was an intricate web of trails, mountain passes, and sea lanes traversing deserts and mountain ranges. Remarkably few individuals traveled the entire distance. Instead, merchandise passed from one trader to the next, much like the baton in an extended relay race.

Silk was the most celebrated commodity. Chinese farmers cultivated silkworms and wove their delicate thread into fabric, and for a considerable period no one else understood how to produce it, so wealthy buyers in distant lands paid extravagant prices for it. Traders also transported spices, glass, metal goods, and horses, returning with items such as gold, silver, and cotton.

Travel was arduous and hazardous. Caravans of camels crossed scorching, arid deserts and frigid mountain passes, and merchants paused at oasis towns, where they could obtain water, provisions, and secure lodging. Some of these settlements grew prosperous by selling supplies and collecting fees from passing travelers.

The routes carried considerably more than merchandise. Ideas and beliefs circulated as well: religions such as Buddhism spread along the routes, as did innovations such as papermaking. Travelers exchanged stories, music, and foods, and they also transmitted diseases. Because commerce brought together people from distant regions, communities continually learned from one another.

The overland routes gradually faded, partly because sea routes became more convenient and economical. Nevertheless, the history of the Silk Road demonstrates how trade can interconnect the world.

Questions

1. Why is it misleading to picture the Silk Road as a single road?

_____

_____

2. By what process did merchandise move between China and the Mediterranean?

_____

_____

3. What made silk such a valuable commodity?

_____

_____

4. What hazards did caravans confront?

_____

_____

5. How did certain oasis towns become prosperous?

_____

_____

6. Apart from merchandise, what circulated along the Silk Road?

_____

_____

7. Interpret the passage's concluding sentence.

_____

_____

Words to know

routes: the paths or roads that travelers follow
relay: a race or job in which one person hands off to the next
caravans: groups of travelers and animals who journey together
oasis: a place in a desert where there is water and plants grow
merchants: people who buy and sell goods for a living

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: The Silk Road

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: The Silk Road

Easier · 247 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.3

1. It was a web of trails, mountain passes, and sea routes.
2. Few people went the whole way, so goods passed from one trader to the next, like a relay race.
3. For a long time no one outside China knew how to make it, and rich people far away paid a lot for it.
4. Hot, dry deserts and cold mountain passes.
5. They sold supplies and charged travelers fees.
6. Ideas and beliefs such as Buddhism, inventions such as papermaking, stories, music, foods, and diseases.
7. Trade can bring faraway places and people into contact and link them together.

Triangle: The Silk Road

This passage · 253 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5.7

1. It was a web of trails, mountain passes, and sea lanes.
2. They passed from one trader to the next, like a relay race, because few people traveled the whole distance.
3. For a long time no one outside China knew how to make it, and rich people in distant lands paid high prices for it.
4. Hot, dry deserts and cold mountain passes.
5. They sold supplies and charged fees to travelers.
6. Ideas and beliefs, such as Buddhism, inventions such as papermaking, stories, music, foods, and diseases.
7. Trade can bring far-off places and peoples into contact and connect them.

Square: The Silk Road

Harder · 264 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 11.4

1. It was an intricate web of trails, mountain passes, and sea lanes.
2. It passed from one trader to the next, like a relay race, because few individuals traveled the entire distance.
3. For a long period no one outside China knew how to produce it, so wealthy buyers in distant lands paid extravagant prices.
4. Scorching, arid deserts and frigid mountain passes.
5. By selling supplies and collecting fees from passing travelers.
6. Ideas and beliefs such as Buddhism, innovations such as papermaking, stories, music, foods, and diseases.

7. Trade can bring distant places and peoples into contact and connect them.