

The Silk Routes



TEACHER'S GUIDE



This cave mural on the Silk Route shows Xuanzang, a Chinese Buddhist monk, returning from India. Image via Wikimedia Commons is in the public domain.

Acknowledgements

This Investigating History unit was developed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in partnership with the following organizations and individuals:

Lead Curriculum Authors: Primary Source

Lead Authors

Deborah Cunningham
Jill Stevens

EL Specialist

Tanya Bogaty

Contributing Authors

Rachel Barker
Christine Gonzalez
Jennifer Boyle Nigro
Sara Wahid
Susan Zeiger

2024–25 Curriculum Revisions: Educurious by NCEE

Lead Author

Tricia Farquharson

Lead Reviewer

Kasha Browning

EL Specialist

Becky Lawrence

Editor

Gayle Klim

Multilingual Learner Specialists: Transformative Learning Collaborative

Allison Audet
Paula Merchant

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Kathryn Gabriele
Dylan Geesey
Reuben Henriques
Rebekah Judson
Miesha Keita
Katherine Tarca

Copyright Notice



All original content in this work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) and © 2025 by DESE. Third party content including, but not limited to, images, illustrations, and photographs, are subject to their own license terms.

Reference in this curriculum to any specific commercial products, processes, or services, or the use of any trade, firm, or corporation name is for the information and convenience of the public, and does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Our office is not responsible for and does not in any way guarantee the accuracy of information in other sites accessible through links herein. For more information please contact: InvestigatingHistory@mass.gov.

Table of Contents

Unit Information	3
Unit Inquiry Map	5
Unit Overview	7
Vocabulary List	12
Lesson Plans	13
Cluster 1: Traveling the Silk Routes	15
Cluster 2: In-Depth Inquiry: Exchange at the Oasis	106
Cluster 3: The Silk Road Legacy	134
Summative Assessment	191
Student Version	198
Supplemental Resources	203
Educative Resources	205

UNIT INFORMATION

The Silk Routes

Unit Throughlines

How does trade affect ideas and culture?

EU 1. The geography and topography of regions affect how people travel and trade across distant regions. These factors help explain the success and lasting influence of the Silk Routes, which connected Asia, Africa, and Europe thousands of years ago with a trade network that continues to move goods and spread ideas today.

EU 2. Trade routes spread cultures and beliefs across regions and continents because economic exchange also leads to the sharing of religious beliefs, languages, art, and technologies. These influences play an important role in shaping societies in both the past and present

EU 3. Trade networks can promote openness and cultural exchange between societies, but they can also challenge policies about religious and ethnic diversity. Whether trade leads to acceptance of cultural differences or conflict and oppression often depends on how societies react during times of social change.

Learning Progression

Traveling the Silk Routes | 8 Lessons

What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?

- L 1. Activate background knowledge of the geography and development of Asian cultures using a map to generate questions about how trade affects ideas and cultures.
- L 2. Generate questions about important trade goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes, and begin to answer them through map and timeline analysis.
- L 3. Analyze interactive maps to reach conclusions about the geographic features that Silk Route travelers would have encountered and make inferences about their impact.
- L 4. Summarize the differences between land and sea trade on the Silk Routes using map and video sources.
- L 5. Summarize the differences between land and sea trade on the Silk Routes using map and video sources.
- L 6. Explain the relevance of multiple sources for answering questions about the goods, ideas, and people involved in Silk Road interactions in the first millennium.
- L 7. Explain the relevance of multiple sources for answering questions about the goods, ideas, and people involved in Silk Road interactions in the first millennium.
- L 8. Craft a written argument on the Supporting Question that includes evidence-supported claims. Share views with the class in open discussion.

In-Depth Inquiry: Exchange at the Oasis | 3 Lessons

What would a traveler or trader on the Silk Routes experience?

- L 9. Read multiple sources and synthesize information to develop a plausible identity for a character involved in Silk Road exchange and an argument for the importance of that character's contribution.
- L 10. Read multiple sources and synthesize information to develop a plausible identity for a character involved in Silk Road exchange and an argument for the importance of that character's contribution.
- L 11. Orally represent a historically based character's role, and listen to gather new information about what a traveler on the Silk Routes might experience.

Key Practice Standards

PS 2. Develop and evaluate relevant guiding questions with peer support.

PS 5. Critique the usefulness of a historical source for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

Key Literacy Standards

RCA-H.6-8.1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, quoting or paraphrasing as appropriate.

RCA-H.6-8.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

SLCA.6-8.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on discipline-specific topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

WCA.6-8.1. Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

WCA.6-8.9. Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, interpretation, reflection, and research.

The Silk Road Legacy | 5 Lessons

What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance?

- L 12. Evaluate sources on how tolerant the Chinese were of foreign religions in the 1st millennium and over time in the region of the old Silk Routes.
- L 13. Determine what the Uyghur situation in today's China reveals about the Silk Road legacy of tolerance.
- L 14. Analyze UN Sustainable Development Goal 16 and responses to the Uyghur crisis to plan for taking informed action.
- L 15. Students will be able to synthesize knowledge gained from analyzing sources and apply their understanding to answer the Cluster Supporting Question.
- L 16. Use the Know and Wonder Chart and Inquiry Charts to identify important takeaway learnings from each cluster of the unit.

Summative Assessment | 1 Day

The Summative Assessment for Unit 7.3 provides students with the opportunity to showcase the knowledge and skills they have developed throughout the unit. Students will engage in structured activities that guide them toward crafting a well-supported written response to the Unit Essential Question:

How does trade affect ideas and culture?

Students will begin with a collaborative Discussion Diamond activity, where they will generate and organize possible responses to the Essential Question using evidence from the unit. They will then individually compose a two-paragraph written argument utilizing unit sources and explaining how those sources support their claim. By engaging in collaborative discussions and evidence-based writing, students will demonstrate their understanding of the ways in which trade influences cultural exchange and the spread of ideas.

Grade 7, Unit 3

The Silk Routes



How does trade affect ideas and culture?

Framing the Unit

Cultural exchange and trade across the vast Eurasian steppes and mountains were practices that spanned millennia and drew in the whole of Asia, continuing into the present. This unit focuses on the first millennium of travel on the Silk Routes, which includes the heyday of traffic during the 7th and 8th centuries. The content of these lessons connects the three prior Asia units in the IH curriculum (Units 6.2, 7.1, and 7.2) and previews material from Units 7.4 (Southeast Asia) and 7.5 (Europe). Each of these regions was involved in bridging Asian cultures in ways that shaped their societies and brought social change.

Cluster 1 consists of eight lessons that orient students to what the “Silk Routes” were and the goods, people, and geographic features that a traveler or trader might encounter there.

Cluster 2 is an In-Depth Inquiry that involves a trade simulation in which students consider the question: *What would a traveler or trader on the Silk Routes experience?*

With the Silk Route travel and contact came an exchange of ideas, religions, technologies, cultural forms, and tolerance for differences.

In Cluster 3, students investigate both ancient and current policies toward religious and ethnic diversity in China while asking: *What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance?*

Note: This interactive timeline: [Cultures of the Silk Road Timeline](#), created by Silk Road Seattle, may be enlarged and printed as a poster for classroom use.

Prepare to teach this unit by exploring the [Background Brief: The Silk Routes](#), which was designed to help you build content knowledge through a variety of resources. The brief also highlights current perspectives and research—along with potential misconceptions and any debates you should know about—so you can present this unit with confidence.

Unit Overview*Enduring Understandings*

1. The geography and topography of regions affect how people travel and trade across distant regions. These factors help explain the success and lasting influence of the Silk Routes, which connected Asia, Africa, and Europe thousands of years ago with a trade network that continues to move goods and spread ideas today.
2. Trade routes spread cultures and beliefs across regions and continents because economic exchange also leads to the sharing of religious beliefs, languages, art, and technologies. These influences play an important role in shaping societies in both the past and present
3. Trade networks can promote openness and cultural exchange between societies, but they can also challenge policies about religious and ethnic diversity. Whether trade leads to acceptance of cultural differences or conflict and oppression often depends on how societies react during times of social change.

Connections to Current Events and Issues

Connections to today's world and students' lives are built into this unit. Other contemporary connections could be added or developed for various topics of study within this unit, and we encourage you to take advantage of opportunities to connect students' learning to contemporary local, national, and global developments that may arise as you teach this unit. Some ideas for linking this unit to current events and issues include:

- The Belt & Road Initiative: In 2013, the Chinese government announced the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI), a massive infrastructure project now involving over 150 countries. Using the historical Silk Routes as an analogy, China promised to invigorate trade and expand its global influence through pipelines, ports, roads, railways, and power plants. See [Understanding the Belt and Road](#), a data visualization from Kontinentalist, to get started learning more. Students may appreciate the opportunity to consider whether the historical analogy of a “New Silk Route” is an appropriate one.
- In the first millennium of the Silk Routes, trade and travel could be halted by bandits or pirates, a failure to secure passes, or weather events. What causes travel to stop or slow down in our age? Explore examples like the story of the *Ever Given*, the megaship that got stuck in the Suez Canal in 2021, bringing global trade through the Canal to a halt. Or follow the journey of journalist Paul Salopek of Out of Eden Walk and his Esri Storymap, [On Foot in the Path of the Silk Road](#)—see the section on Barriers to Trade or his article on [police stops](#).
- Buddhas of Bamiyan: A recent example of religious intolerance on the old Silk Roads (corresponding to Lessons 11–13) is the 2001 destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan at the hands of Taliban militants. The two colossal Buddhas were cut into the rockface of the Bamiyan Valley of Afghanistan in the 6th or 7th century CE, standing for over 1,000 years before they were blasted away as an act of protest.

*Vocabulary (in order of appearance)***Tier 3 Vocabulary**

Silk Routes/Silk Road
oasis
terrain

globalization
cultural diffusion
imperial

ethnic minority group
separatism

Priority Tier 2 Vocabulary

culture

tolerance

persecution

Lesson Clusters*Cluster 1: Traveling the Silk Routes (Lessons 1-8)***What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?**

Focus Standards: 7.T1b.2g, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, PS 2, PS 5, RCA-H.6-8.1, RCA-H.6-8.2, SLCA.6-8.1, WCA.6-8.1, WCA.6-8.9

In this cluster, students will explore what the “Silk Routes” were and the goods, people, and geographic features of the Silk Road by investigating artifacts, stories, and sources. They will begin by activating prior knowledge of the development of Asian cultures. Students will then explore the region's geography and its impact on traders and travelers. Throughout the lessons, students will begin to understand how cultures change through cultural diffusion and interaction. Students will use the information they gather to write an argument explaining which goods or ideas were the most important to move along the Silk Routes.

*Cluster 2: In-Depth Inquiry: Exchange at the Oasis (Lessons 9-11)***What would a traveler or trader on the Silk Routes experience?**

Focus Standards: 7.T1b.2g, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, PS 2, PS 5, RCA-H.6-8.1, SLCA.6-8.1

Cluster 2 comprises the simulation activity and debrief. Through question development, research in sources, character development, and presentation in the simulation, students demonstrate their command of PS 2 and PS 5 as well as W1 and W9. Students will review multiple sources and synthesize information to embody a character during the simulation. Finally, students will interview each other to learn more about the experiences of traders and travelers along the Silk Routes.

Cluster 3: The Silk Road Legacy (Lessons 12-16)

What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance?

Focus Standards: 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, PS 2, PS 5, RCA-H.6-8.1

With the Silk Route travel and contact came an exchange of ideas, religions, technologies, cultural forms, and tolerance in different ways. In the last group of lessons in Cluster 3, students investigate ancient and current policies toward religious and ethnic diversity, specifically in China. They ask: What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance? The cluster culminates with students writing a one-pager that illustrates the contrasts between religious tolerance in the past and present along the Silk Road.

Summative Assessment: The Silk Routes: Trade and Cultural Exchange Across Asia (Lesson 17)

Focus Standards: 7.T1a.1, 7.T1b.2g, 7.T2a.1, 7.T2a.3, 7.T2b.2e, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, PS 2, PS 5, RCA-H.6-8.1, RCA-H.6-8.2, SLCA.6-8.1, WCA.6-8.1, WCA.6-8.9

The Summative Assessment for Unit 7.3 provides students with the opportunity to showcase the knowledge and skills they have developed throughout the unit. Students will engage in structured activities that guide them toward crafting a well-supported written response to the Unit Essential Question:

How does trade affect ideas and culture?

Students will begin with a collaborative Discussion Diamond activity, where they will generate and organize possible responses to the Essential Question using evidence from the unit. They will then individually compose a two-paragraph written argument utilizing unit sources and explaining how those sources support their claim. By engaging in collaborative discussions and evidence-based writing, students will demonstrate their understanding of the ways in which trade influences cultural exchange and the spread of ideas.

Unit Focus Standards

Content Standards

- **7.T1b.2:** Describe important economic, political, and religious developments in Indian and Central Asian history and evaluate the ways in which they conform to or differ from developments in societies in other regions of the world.
 - **7.T1b.2g:** the role topography and geography played in making trade along the several routes of the Silk Road viable and lucrative; connections through trade routes to Africa, Europe, and China

Unit Overview

- **7.T2b.2:** Describe important economic, political, and religious developments in early Chinese history and evaluate the ways in which they are similar to or different from the characteristics of societies in other regions of the world.
 - **7.T2b.2f:** China's role in trade across Asia and to and from Africa and Europe along the Silk Roads and the introduction of Buddhism in China starting c. 1st century CE.
- **7.T2c.1:** Trace the spread of Buddhism from India in the 4th century BCE to China, Korea, and Japan, and its development in Japan from the 6th through the 13th century CE; explain significant cultural contributions of ancient Japan (e.g., Buddhist philosophy, art, calligraphy, and temple and landscape architecture).

Practice Standards

- **PS 2:** Develop and evaluate relevant guiding questions with peer support.
- **PS 5:** Critique the usefulness of a historical source for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

Literacy Standards

- **RCA-H.6-8.1:** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, quoting or paraphrasing as appropriate.
- **RCA-H.6-8.2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- **SLCA.6-8.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on discipline-specific topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **WCA.6-8.1:** Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
- **WCA.6-8.9:** Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, interpretation, reflection, and research.

Vocabulary List



Grade 7, Unit 3: The Silk Routes

Vocabulary List

Traveling the Silk Routes (Lessons 1-8)

Lesson	Word	Definition
1	culture (n.)	the knowledge, beliefs, and ways of life shared by a group of people, such as language, food, art, and music
2	Silk Routes/Silk Road (n.)	a network of routes—regularly traveled pathways—of trade and cultural exchange in Asia
3	oasis (n.)	an area in a desert that has water and plants (A large oasis might be a town.)
3	terrain (n.)	land with a particular kind of natural features
4	globalization (n.)	the increasing connectedness and interdependence of world cultures and economies, made possible by trade and technology
5	cultural diffusion (n.)	the spreading out and merging of pieces from different cultures
5	tolerance (n.)	willingness to accept feelings, habits, or beliefs that are different from your own

In-Depth Inquiry: Exchange at the Oasis (Lessons 9-11)

Lesson	Word	Definition
--------	------	------------

The Silk Road Legacy (Lessons 12-16)

Lesson	Word	Definition
12	imperial (adj.)	having to do with an empire, emperor, or empress
12	persecution (n.)	when someone or a group is treated unfairly or cruelly because of their beliefs, race, or political views
13	ethnic minority group (n.)	a group of people sharing a common and distinctive culture, religion, and/or language who are not in the cultural majority
13	separatism (n.)	a policy or wish to leave an existing state

LESSON PLANS

Traveling the Silk Routes

What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?

CONTENTS

Lesson 1

Cluster 1 Unit Launch

Lesson 2

Cluster 1 Launch

Lesson 3

Geographical Challenges of the Silk Route

Lesson 4

Maritime Routes

Lesson 5

Cultural Diffusion Along the Silk Routes

Lesson 6

Travel on the Silk Routes (Part 1)

Lesson 7

Travel on the Silk Routes (Part 2)

Lesson 8

Putting It Together and Formative Assessment

Overview

In this cluster, students will explore what the “Silk Routes” were and the goods, people, and geographic features of the Silk Road by investigating artifacts, stories, and sources. They will begin by activating prior knowledge of the development of Asian cultures. Students will then explore the region's geography and its impact on traders and travelers. Throughout the lessons, students will begin to understand how cultures change through cultural diffusion and interaction. Students will use the information they gather to write an argument explaining which goods or ideas were the most important to move along the Silk Routes.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this cluster, students should be able to...

- Describe the purposes and features of exchange on the Silk Routes (land and sea).
- Generate inquiry questions and identify sources and information relevant to answering them.
- Describe the goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes.
- Interpret social studies arguments by analyzing relevant information from multiple sources to support claims (WIDA ELD-SS.6-8.Argue.Interpretive).

Vocabulary

TIER 2

culture

TIER 3

cultural diffusion

tolerance

globalization
oasis
Silk Routes/Silk Road
terrain

Cluster Focus Standards

Practice Standards

STANDARD	LESSON(S)
PS 2: Develop and evaluate relevant guiding questions with peer support.	1-8
PS 5: Critique the usefulness of a historical source for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.	1-8

Content Standards

STANDARD	LESSON(S)
7.T1b.2g: the role topography and geography played in making trade along the several routes of the Silk Road viable and lucrative; connections through trade routes to Africa, Europe, and China	1-8
7.T2b.2f: China's role in trade across Asia and to and from Africa and Europe along the Silk Roads and the introduction of Buddhism in China starting c. 1st century CE.	1-8
7.T2c.1: Trace the spread of Buddhism from India in the 4th century BCE to China, Korea, and Japan, and its development in Japan from the 6th through the 13th century CE; explain significant cultural contributions of ancient Japan (e.g., Buddhist philosophy, art, calligraphy, and temple and landscape architecture).	1-8

Literacy Standards

STANDARD	LESSON(S)
----------	-----------

RCA-H.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, quoting or paraphrasing as appropriate.	6-7
RCA-H.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.	1-2, 4
SLCA.6-8.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on discipline-specific topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	5, 8
WCA.6-8.1: Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.	8
WCA.6-8.9: Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, interpretation, reflection, and research.	1-2, 6-8

Unit 3, Cluster 1 Inquiry Chart (Teacher Version)

Unit EQ	How does trade affect ideas and culture?
Cluster SQ	What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?
What questions will we ask?	

What did we do?	What did we learn that helps us answer our question(s)?
Lesson 3: An interactive tour tracing travel on the Silk Route from Samarkand to Chang'an.	The Silk Road was bordered by mountains to the north and south, including the Himalayas, the Karakorum, the Kunlun, the Tian Shan, and the Pamir ranges. The Silk Road experienced extreme temperatures and had infrequent and irregular water supplies. Transportation was limited to pack animals, and it could take six months to travel from Kashgar to Chang'an.
Lesson 4: Analyzed a map and watched a video about the Maritime Silk Routes.	People carried and traded various products because regions had different specialties. Small quantities of light and valuable goods were traded overland. Later, the sea routes carried more goods in bulk.
Lesson 5: Jigsaw activity about cultural diffusion through religions.	Cultural diffusion went hand in hand with trade, and ideas moved in all directions on the routes. These included artistic patterns and motifs, architectural styles, languages, and religions (Buddhism, Manichaeism, Islam, Church of the East, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Hinduism). The Silk Routes were characterized by great diversity and religious tolerance

What did we do?	What did we learn that helps us answer our question(s)?
Lesson 6: Source analysis about the goods, ideas, and people that moved on the Silk Road.	Through the Silk Routes, intangibles like skills and technologies moved in all directions with trade caravans, ships, and their products. These included papermaking and woodblock printing (which forever changed knowledge production and exchange), silkmaking, metalworking, and glassmaking. New technologies like the crossbow, magnetic compass, and gunpowder also spread.
Lesson 7: Finished source analysis about the goods, ideas, and people that moved on the Silk Road. Wrote a paragraph answering an inquiry question using the sources as evidence to support our answer.	Through the Silk Routes, intangibles like skills and technologies moved in all directions with trade caravans, ships, and their products. These included papermaking and woodblock printing (which forever changed knowledge production and exchange), silkmaking, metalworking, and glassmaking. New technologies like the crossbow, magnetic compass, and gunpowder also spread.

LESSON 1

Cluster 1 Unit Launch

EQ	How does trade affect ideas and culture?
SQ	What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE
Activate background knowledge of the geography and development of Asian cultures using a map to generate questions about how trade affects ideas and cultures.	Ask and answer questions about a topic using information from a map orally and in writing.

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson launches the Unit 3 Essential Question: How does trade impact ideas and culture? and prompts students to generate questions through the Question Formulation Technique (QFT). Students activate prior knowledge about Asian geography and development before exploring the broader theme of trade connections across Eurasia. They analyze the concept of culture, examining how trade influences language, food, art, and traditions. Using a Silk Routes Map & Timeline, students observe trade patterns and develop inquiry questions about trade’s role in shaping culture. Through QFT, they brainstorm, classify, and prioritize questions, contributing to a Know and Wonder Chart that will guide their learning throughout the unit. Finally, students share their top questions, reinforcing the unit’s focus on how trade drives cultural exchange and historical change.

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T1b.2g, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, RCA-H.6-8.2, WCA.6-8.9
See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS
☐ Lesson 1 Slide Deck
☐ Unit Kickoff
☐ Silk Routes Map & Timeline
☐ Silk Routes Map & Timeline (Teacher Version)
☐ Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1–8
☐ Chart paper
☐ Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart
VOCABULARY
culture

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
Activator	5
Introduce the Essential Question	10
Question Formulation Technique	25
Share the Questions	10

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- [Silk Routes Map & Timeline \(Sentence Starters\)](#): Supports inquiry language when working on the Know and Wonder Chart
- [Question Language and Literacy Builder](#): Supports the generation of new questions during the QFT activity

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Encourage students to use the Sentence Starters handout and the Question LLB to create questions. Provide example pictures for the organizer if necessary.
- Look Fors: Questions should use examples provided in the Question LLB and include Tier 1 and 2 words.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Encourage students to use the Sentence Starters handout and the Question LLB to create questions.
- Look Fors: Questions should use sentence frames provided on the Question LLB. Answers should be in students' own words using Tier 2 vocabulary.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students should be able to complete the activity independently.
- Look Fors: Questions should include more precise Tier 3 academic vocabulary and a greater level of detail.

Lesson 1: Cluster 1 Unit Launch

Unless otherwise noted, Investigating History is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.



ADVANCE PREPARATION

Create a Know and Wonder Chart in the format of your choice (digital or on chart paper) for each class period.

Prepare to teach this unit by exploring the [Background Brief: The Silk Routes](#), which was designed to help you build content knowledge through a variety of resources. The brief also highlights current perspectives and research—along with potential misconceptions and any debates you should know about—so you can present this unit with confidence.

🚩 Activator (5 minutes)

Slide 2: Activate students' prior knowledge by asking: *What do you remember from Units 1 and 2 about the geography and development of Asian societies?*

A variety of features and effects might be described here.
Possible responses:

- Plains and river valleys of eastern China: where earliest settlements began
- Yellow River: made the soil fertile for agriculture (loess) or brought dangerous flooding
- Mountains or deserts of western China: natural barriers to invasion (Great Wall across north)
- Mountains and swamps of southern China: need for terraces or drainage to grow crops (rice)
- Rivers of the Tibetan plateau: good sources of hydroelectric power
- Lack of a north-south river in China: need for Grand Canal
- Location of Korea: strategic but vulnerable to invasion
- Location of Korea: influences of steppe culture (horseback riding, shamans)
- Mountains down the spine of Korea: most settlement and agriculture in the West
- Japan: archipelago connected by water, some protection from invasion and outside influences
- Japan: spread out islands, mountainous—difficult to unite as one country

Lesson 1: Cluster 1 Unit Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

- Japan: influence of ocean on diet, lifestyle, arts (gardens)

Allow students to turn and talk about what they remember from prior learning. After students talk with a partner, have a few students share what they remember.

Explain to students that this unit is different from the others: rather than focusing on one region, it focuses on *connections between* many regions of Eurasia—some places they have already studied in sixth and seventh grades, and some regions they will study later this year. Give students the [Unit Kickoff](#) to use in the next activity.

Introduce the Essential Question (10 minutes)

Slide 3: Display the foods from different origins. Ask students:

- *Describe what you see.*
- *Where do you think each food type originated?*
- *How do you think these became common foods in America?*

Slide 4: Introduce the Unit's Essential Question:

 **How does trade affect ideas and culture?**

Slide 5: Ask students the following:

- *How would you define culture?*
- *What does culture include? (clothing, food, language, traditions)*

Slide 6: Share with students the vocabulary word for this lesson: *culture*.

- Say the word: *culture*.
- Use the word in context: *The customs and culture are part of the rich heritage of our country.*
- Share the student-friendly definition: *the knowledge, beliefs, and ways of life shared by a group of people, such as language, food, art, and music.*

Lesson 1: Cluster 1 Unit Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

- Engage with the word: *Some options include inviting students to provide additional examples, restate the definition in their own words, or answer a question using the word. Encourage multilingual learners to translate the word into their home language.*

Ask students: *How has culture shaped your life today?*

Tell students we will learn how trade affects ideas and culture in this unit.

Slide 7: Ask students: *What do you know or think you know about how trade affects ideas and culture?*

Students will Think-Pair-Share to record what they know. After they talk with a partner, have a few students share what they know. Record student responses on a Know and Wonder Chart that you can keep on display during the unit.

Question Formulation Technique (25 minutes)

Slide 8: Distribute [Silk Routes Map & Timeline](#) to each student. Pause while students observe the map and gather initial ideas about what they notice.

Possible responses include:

- Trade routes across Eurasia
- Maritime routes from Iran to Japan
- Different civilizations or cities
- Geographic features (deserts, bodies of water, mountains, etc.)

Inform students that in this unit, they will work on asking questions that will guide their inquiry into the topic and help deepen their understanding. One way to do this is through QFT, which they will use to complete the “Wonder” portion of the chart.

Slide 9: Explain that students will learn a strategy called the QFT: the Question Formulation Technique. It has three steps:

- Step 1: Brainstorm questions.
- Step 2: Classify and Improve questions.
- Step 3: Prioritize questions.

Lesson 1: Cluster 1 Unit Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Slide 10: Introduce the Question Focus: Trade affects ideas and culture. Read the Question Focus aloud again. Tell students they can look at the map for ideas while asking questions about the Question Focus, or QFocus.

Step 1: Brainstorm questions.

Slide 11: Allow students to work in small groups or individually to brainstorm questions. Each group of students should be distributed a piece of chart paper, a marker, and three sticky notes. Then ask each group to choose a scribe who can write quickly and clearly.

Tell students they will ask questions about a statement. We'll call this our QFocus:

Review the rules on the slide for brainstorming questions:

- Ask as many questions as you can about the QFocus.
- Number each question.
- Don't discuss, answer, or judge any question.
- Write down every question exactly as stated.

With the QFocus prominently displayed on the slide deck, prompt students to generate as many questions as possible about that statement.

Start the timer on the slide to allow students to ask questions for 10–12 minutes. Each scribe records their group's questions on a sheet of chart paper, numbering each question as they go.

Step 2: Classify and improve questions.

Slide 12: Discuss what is meant by open and closed questions and the value of each. Explain the task for classifying and improving questions. Explain that open questions need an explanation. They can't be answered with a yes, no, or one-word answer. Closed questions can be answered with a yes, no, or one word.

Ask: *What are the benefits of each kind of question?*

Possible responses:

- Open questions can spark discussions.
- Open questions relate to big ideas.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Use [Silk Routes Map & Timeline \(Sentence Starters\)](#) to support multilingual learners. You may also refer your multilingual learners to the [Question Language and Literacy Builder](#) to support the generation of new questions during the QFT Activity.

Lesson 1: Cluster 1 Unit Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

- Closed questions can help with finding facts and supporting details.

Review the rules on the slide for classifying and improving questions:

- Identify all closed questions with a C.
- Identify all open questions with an O.
- Change any statements to questions using a question word (who, what, where, why, when, how).

Start the timer on the slide to allow students to classify questions for 7–8 minutes.

Step 3: Prioritize questions.

Slide 13: Review the rules on the slide for prioritizing questions:

- Identify your group's top three **open** questions.
- Copy each top three question onto its own sticky note.
- Decide why, as a group, you chose each question.
- Pick a spokesperson to explain your three questions to the class.

Start the timer on the slide to allow students to prioritize questions for 4 minutes. As you facilitate this, highlight how valuable questions are closely related to the Question Focus and will help students answer the unit's Essential Question.

Share the Questions (10 minutes)

Slide 14: Ask the spokesperson from each group to share their three sticky notes. The students should then read their questions out loud, including why their group thought the question was important.

After reading each question, ask the student to post it on the right side of the **Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart**. If the questions are similar, group them together.

Reinforce that the upcoming lessons will help us answer their questions and the Essential Question: *How does trade affect ideas and culture?*

Lesson 1: Cluster 1 Unit Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Silk Routes Map & Timeline (Teacher Version)

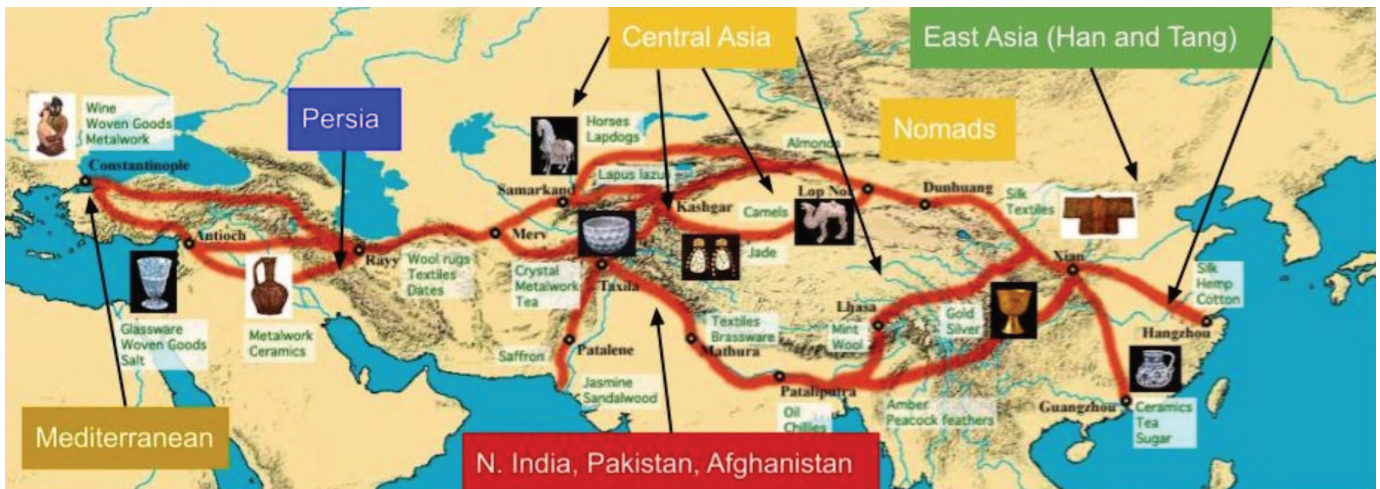
Main Overland and Maritime Trade Routes (1st century)



Main trade routes across Asia. Image courtesy of Smithsonian Institution, used with permission.

Where was the Silk Road? The Silk Road was in Eurasia. The Silk Road was a network of trade routes that stretched from China to the Middle East and Europe.

Silk Road Trade Routes



Silk Roads trade routes. Image courtesy of Silk Road Seattle (labels added).

Background:

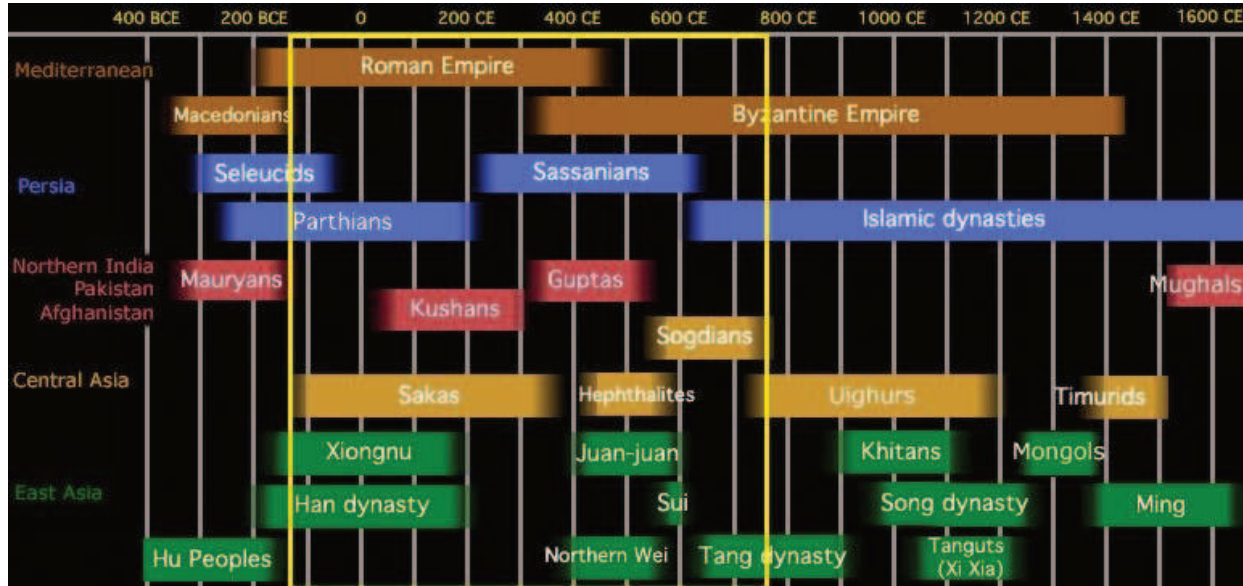
The Silk Routes went from east to west and back again, with branches to the north and south. Their heyday, or most prosperous time, began during China's Han dynasty, around 130 BCE, and ended in the Tang dynasty in 755 CE. In those years, the biggest empires were the Sassanians (Persians) to the west and the Chinese to the east. Between them were important "middlemen," such as the Sogdians of Central Asia, who relayed goods from one end to the other.

At their greatest extent, the Chinese and Persian territories were only a few hundred miles apart. Whether fighting or cooperating with one another, these empires tried to make sure trade continued to flow.

1. Why was this network called the Silk Road? **Silk, a highly valued commodity produced primarily in China, was one of the most important goods transported along these routes between Asia and Europe.**
2. What goods were traded or exchanged on the Silk Routes? **Gold, silver, horses, spices, fabric, glassware, metal work, jade, brassware, camels, food**
3. What other goods might the Silk Road have been named for? **Someone from the Mediterranean might have called them the "Glass Roads," someone from Central Asia the "Wool Carpet Roads," or someone from China the "Ceramic Roads."**

Silk Road Cultures Timeline

most active period of trade (heyday) in yellow



Silk Roads cultures timeline. Image courtesy of Silk Road Seattle.

1. In 130 BCE, which Chinese dynasty opened up trade with the rest of the Silk Routes? **Han dynasty**
2. What two Persian empires ruled for the longest during the Silk Routes' heyday? **Parthians and Sassanians**
3. Who were the Central Asian middlemen/women during the height of trade from 581 to 755 CE? **Sogdians**
4. Which Chinese dynasty ruled at the end of the Silk Routes' heyday? When was it powerful, approximately? **Tang dynasty, approximately 600–900 CE**
5. Which two Mediterranean empires ruled during the Silk Routes' heyday? **Roman and Byzantine**
6. Name one group from each region that would have interacted with each other along the Silk Routes during their heyday. **Possible responses: Romans/Parthians/Kushans/Han, Byzantines/Sassanians/Sogdians/Sui**

Inquiry Chart Questions

What more do you want to know about the goods and ideas that moved across the Silk Routes?

What other related questions can help us answer this Supporting Question?

LESSON 2

Cluster 1 Launch

EQ How does trade affect ideas and culture?

SQ What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Generate questions about important trade goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes, and begin to answer them through map and timeline analysis.

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE

Summarize goods and ideas exchanged on the Silk Routes using information from a timeline and map orally and in writing.

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson launches the Supporting Question for Cluster 1: *What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?* and prompts students to generate questions about this through developing the Inquiry Chart. It then begins to answer some of those questions, specifically around the definitions of the term Silk Road and two aspects of Silk Road trade: the goods traded and the people encountered. The goods of the Silk Routes are introduced through a map showing the goods along the Silk Routes. Students review the map to inquire why the trade routes are called the Silk Road. The people of the Silk Routes are introduced through a historical timeline that also gives students practice with comparative chronology and analysis. Students also identify the main idea of the timeline regarding the diversity of people along the routes. Finally, they return to the Inquiry Chart, which is part of considering the cluster's Supporting Question: *What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?*

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T1b.2g, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, RCA-H.6-8.2, WCA.6-8.9
See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS

- ☐ [Lesson 2 Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [Cluster 1 Inquiry Chart](#)
- ☐ [Cluster 1 Inquiry Chart \(Teacher Version\)](#)
- ☐ Lesson 1: Silk Routes Map & Timeline
- ☐ Lesson 1: Silk Routes Map & Timeline (Teacher Version)
- ☐ Lesson 1: Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1-8
- ☐ Lesson 1: Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart

VOCABULARY

Silk Routes/Silk Road

Lesson 2: Cluster 1 Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
Launching the Question	40
Revisit the Inquiry Chart	10

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- [Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1–8 \(Graphic Organizer\)](#): Helps students engage with unit vocabulary

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Encourage students to use the Graphic Organizer, and provide example pictures if necessary. Explain the word *goods* if students do not understand its meaning in this context. Allow them to translate the text and questions and/or highlight key words to guide them to the information (e.g., Chinese dynasty). Encourage them to add to their answers from class discussions.
- Look Fors: Sentences or phrases should use Tier 1 words and words from the images or text.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Encourage students to use the Graphic Organizer. Explain the word *goods* if students do not understand its meaning in this context. Encourage students to add to their answers from class discussions.
- Look Fors: Answers should be in the students' own words and include information from text and images.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students should be able to write answers independently. Encourage students to add to their answers from class discussions.
- Look Fors: Compound/complex sentences should use more precise Tier 3 academic vocabulary and include a greater level of detail.

Lesson 2: Cluster 1 Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.



ADVANCE PREPARATION

Determine if you want to work with the Inquiry Chart on chart paper or digitally. You will need separate class copies for each class period. Students will also need to have their own copies to work with throughout the cluster, either digitally or printed.

Have each class period's Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart from Lesson 1 easily accessible.

If you have an item made of silk at home, consider bringing it in to show students what silk is.

Determine if you want to work with the Inquiry Chart on chart paper or digitally. You will need separate class copies for each class period. Students will also need to have their own copies to work with throughout the cluster, either digitally or printed.

Have each class period's Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart from Lesson 1 easily accessible.



✦ Launching the Question (40 minutes)

SPARK CURIOSITY

Slide 2: Ask students:

- *What do you notice?* Identify the items in the slide (silkworm, silk threads, silk fabric)
- *What is silk?* Ask students to explain, if they know. If not, give them a quick crash course on silk (some may not know what the material is). Show them or let them touch some silk if you brought in a sample.

Introduce Unit Vocabulary Support

Slide 3: Share a copy of [Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1–8](#) with each student. Explain that this tool will assist us as we learn terms connected to this history. They should clip it into their notebook, save it in their folder or drive, and not throw it away. Use the first page of this document to review the term Silk Routes/Silk Road.

Slide 4: Introduce the new vocabulary word students need to know for this lesson: *Silk Routes/Silk Road*.

- Say the word: *Silk Routes/Silk Road*.
- Use the word in context: *Traders traveled along the Silk Road to buy and sell goods.*



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Provide MLs with the [Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1–8 \(Graphic Organizer\)](#) to help students engage with unit vocabulary. The Curriculum Guidebook provides more information on supporting all students' vocabulary development.

Lesson 2: Cluster 1 Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

- *Remind students of the definition of goods: products or things for sale.*
- *Share the student-friendly definition: a network of routes—regularly traveled pathways—of trade and cultural exchange in Asia.*
 - *Explain to students that we will be using two terms interchangeably in our mini-unit.*
 - *The Silk Routes reminds us of multiple routes, including sea routes.*
 - *The Silk Road is still widely used by historians and is important to understand as shorthand for a network of routes.*
- *Engage with the word: Some options include inviting students to provide additional examples, restate the definition in their own words, or answer a question using the word. Encourage multilingual learners to translate the word into their home language.*
- *Have students add an image representing the definition of the Silk Routes/Silk Road and goods to their [Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1–8 \(Graphic Organizer\)](#).*

Slide 5: Explain that these are the great trade and cultural exchange routes that crossed the Asian continent in ancient times—around 130 BCE. Much later, in 1877, they began to be called the Silk Road, or Silk Routes, named by the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen. They were not called this in antiquity.

INTRODUCE THE SUPPORTING QUESTION AND ELICIT INITIAL THINKING

Slide 6: Introduce the Cluster 1 Launching the Question routine.

Remind students that the Launching the Question routine involves interacting with sources and recording their observations and questions.

Slide 7: Explain that in Cluster 1, students will learn the answer to the following question:



What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?

Lesson 2: Cluster 1 Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Slide 8: Introduce students to the Unit 3 Inquiry Chart–Class Version document, and distribute it to students in your chosen format (printed or digital). Remind students that the Inquiry Chart will help them keep track of their ongoing learning and questions throughout the unit.

- Explain that historians ask many questions to understand and make sense of history and how it connects to the present day.
- Asking good questions starts with considering what they already know, which then helps them identify what they still need to explore and learn.

DEVELOP THE INQUIRY CHART

Ask: *What do you already know about this Supporting Question?*

Prompt students to recall and share what they know about this topic from their initial work with the **Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart** and previous learnings (Unit 1 and 2, their lives, and/or other classes and resources).

Students will Think-Pair-Share to record what they know. After students talk with a partner, have a few students share what they know. Responses should reference information from Unit 2:

- The Indo-Aryans brought the Vedas to South Asia, where they became a sacred text in Hinduism, India's most practiced religion.
- As a result of the Mughal invasion, Islam became part of South Asian society.
- The Vedas, a religious text, were written in Sanskrit. They began as chants brought to South Asia by the Indo-Aryan people.

Ask students which questions we brainstormed in the Wonder column of the Know and Wonder chart might relate to this Supporting Question. Then prompt students to share their ideas in a Think-Pair-Share format.

- Take student responses and record them on the Inquiry Chart that you can keep on display during the unit.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Encourage MLs to use their [Question Language and Literacy Builder](#) to ask questions and write statements about what they wonder.

Lesson 2: Cluster 1 Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Tell students they will now explore the Supporting Question using a set of images. Distribute [Silk Routes Map & Timeline](#). Remind students of their earlier analysis of the map of the main overland and maritime trade routes.

Slide 9: Initiate a Think-Pair-Share for students to answer the question: *Looking at this map, where was the Silk Road?*

Students should notice that the Silk Road was in Eurasia. They may also notice that the Silk Road is a network of routes, as shown on the map using the trails of dots, not a single road as the term implies. Explain that the Silk Road wasn't a road but a network of unmarked, unpaved routes that shifted with different conditions.

Students may observe that the “road” is also a sea route. The maritime Silk Road was the network of routes hugging the coast of China and Southeast Asia on the way to India and points beyond.

Introduce the Silk Road Trade Routes Map

Slide 10: Show students (or have them individually examine) the map, and ask:

- *Why was this network called the Silk Road?*
- *What goods were traded or exchanged on the Silk Routes?*
- *What other goods might the Silk Road have been named for?*

Name some of the regions on the map, and ask students to volunteer what someone from that area might have named the routes.

- For example, someone from the Mediterranean might have called them the “Glass Roads,” someone from Central Asia the “Wool Carpet Roads,” or someone from China the “Ceramic Roads.”
- Historians have proposed everything from the “Jade Roads” or “Glass Roads” to the “Sacred Roads”—because religions, artistic ideas, and technologies moved along these pathways too. The key point is that silk was just one of many things on the move.



TEACHING TIP

The routes are labeled. Gray=northern “fur” routes, blue=maritime routes, red=southern land routes, and green=oasis routes. Ask students what they can infer about the Silk Routes based on these route names.



MAKE CONNECTIONS

The maritime Silk Route came into use centuries after the overland routes, but it eventually became the main mode of long-distance transport. It was the most traveled sea route in the world until 1500. Today it remains one of the world's busiest shipping waterways—and thus an area of great strategic importance.

Lesson 2: Cluster 1 Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.



TEACHING TIP

For background information on recent archaeological finds that indicate an additional Silk Route across the mountains of Tibet, see the *Scientific American* article "[Archaeologists Uncover Another Branch of the Silk Road](#)."

Introduce the Silk Road Culture Timeline

Slide 11: Project the timeline, and remind students that they previously learned the word *dynasty*. Provide the definition again (or reteach the word if necessary): *a family that rules a state (or the time period of their rule)*. Have students add an image to represent the definition to their [Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1–8](#).

Ask students to identify how the information is set up (what the colors and vertical lines represent). Clarify for them that while goods were traded across Asia both earlier and later than this timeline shows, our focus will be on the heyday of the ancient routes: from 130 BCE to 755 CE (represented by a yellow box highlighting this period, which also appears on their handout).

- As a class, read aloud the short text on their [Silk Routes Map & Timeline](#).
- Have students work in pairs to interpret the timeline.

The colors on the map match the timeline, and the map is there to help students visualize different people in their locales. Have students answer the questions on the sheet. After students complete the questions, ask them to reflect on the central idea of this source by asking:

- *Based on what you see in this timeline, what picture do you have of who traders would encounter on the Silk Routes?*

Ensure that they understand the following points:

- Many different peoples and cultures interacted on the Silk Routes.
- This meant that people who used the routes had to learn to relate to lots of people who were different from them.



TEACHING TIP

If you do not have access to a color copier, it would be a good exercise to have students do it digitally (the colors matter for clarity).



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Remember to use [Silk Routes Map & Timeline \(Sentence Starters\)](#) to support multilingual learners.

Lesson 2: Cluster 1 Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.



TEACHING TIP

If students ask why the Silk Routes declined in 755 CE, you can share that a major revolt called the An Lushan rebellion took place then and almost overthrew the Tang dynasty. The Tang reduced their military presence on the Silk Routes, which then became less secure for traders. Read more here: [Relationship Between the Tang Military and Silk Road Prosperity](#).

Revisit the Inquiry Chart (10 minutes)

Slide 12: Direct students to the section on the last page of the [Silk Routes Map & Timeline](#) titled Inquiry Chart Questions.

Ask: *What more do you want to know about the goods and ideas that moved across the Silk Routes?*

Ask: *What other related questions can help us answer this Supporting Question?*

- Prompt students to share their ideas in a Think-Pair-Share format.
- Students should generate one or two questions with their partner to help answer the Supporting Question.
- Pairs will jot down questions on their handouts.

Invite students to share their questions with the whole class.

- Consolidate or synthesize questions related to the Supporting Question as needed so there are three to four representative questions.
- Add these three to four questions to the “What questions will we ask?” section of the class’s Inquiry Chart.
- Prompt students to record the questions on their own Inquiry Chart handouts.

PREVIEW THE LEARNING AHEAD

Share with students that in this cluster, they will use artifacts, writings, images, and maps to learn more about the goods, ideas, and people that moved across the Silk Routes. You will return to this Inquiry Chart throughout the unit, so you must preserve students' thinking here.

Lesson 2: Cluster 1 Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

LESSON 3

Geographical Challenges of the Silk Route

EQ How does trade affect ideas and culture?

SQ What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Analyze interactive maps to reach conclusions about the geographic features that Silk Route travelers would have encountered and make inferences about their impact.

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE

Make inferences about Silk Route geography and its impact on travelers' experiences using visual evidence orally and in writing.

LESSON OVERVIEW

After previously learning what the Silk Routes were and which goods and people moved on them, this lesson asks what geographical features travelers would have encountered en route (all dimensions of the Supporting Question). Students warm up by thinking about what major trips involve today regarding planning and challenges. Then they apply this thinking to the ancient routes while traveling in a virtual fashion on an interactive geographical tour from Sogdiana in Central Asia to China. At each stop, students identify features of the terrain, then make inferences about their meaning for travelers. As this is a cognitively demanding activity, teachers will ask prompt questions to support students in connecting geographic conditions and constraints to travelers' experiences and choices. Students finish by writing a claim explaining the importance of a geographic feature's effects on people and supporting it with evidence from the tour. In the next lesson, they will discuss cultural diffusion and how beliefs and ideas flowed across Eurasia with trade.

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T1b.2g, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1

See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS

- ☐ [Lesson 3 Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [Vocabulary Cards Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [The Terrain and Its Meaning for Travelers](#)
- ☐ [The Terrain and Its Meaning for Travelers \(Teacher Version\)](#)
- ☐ Lesson 1: Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1-8

VOCABULARY

oasis
terrain

Lesson 3: Geographical Challenges of the Silk Route

Unless otherwise noted, Investigating History is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
The Challenges of Travel	10
Investigating Sources: Interactive Tour: A Journey through Silk Road Terrain	35
Revisit the Inquiry Chart	5

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- [The Terrain and Its Meaning for Travelers \(Sentence Frames\)](#): Provides oral language practice for expressing learning during the Investigating Sources routine

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Encourage students to use the Sentence Frames handout and the words and sentence frames provided. Highlight key information for them to write down. Encourage them to add to their answers from class discussions.
- [Look Fors](#): Sentences or phrases using the sentence frames provided should include key words such as *land*. Students may need extra time or a reduced number of locations to complete.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Encourage students to use the Sentence Frames handout. Highlight key information for them to write down. Encourage them to add to their answers from class discussions.
- [Look Fors](#): Students should use key words such as *terrain* and the sentence frames provided. Sentences should include Tier 1 and 2 vocabulary like *extreme* and *temperature*. Students may need extra time to complete.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students should be able to work independently to complete the organizer without scaffolds. They should be able to write well organized sentences with all necessary information. Encourage students to add to their answers during class discussions.
- [Look Fors](#): Compound and complex sentences should include a greater level of detail using evidence from the tour and more Tier 2 and 3 words such as *avalanche* and *alfalfa*.

Lesson 3: Geographical Challenges of the Silk Route

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

The Challenges of Travel (10 minutes)

Slide 2: Pose the question: *Has anyone ever lived in or been to California? Spain? On a long-distance trip? Why did you go there, and what were some challenges you faced?*

- Split the class into two groups: one going to California and one to Spain.
- Explain that one group will imagine traveling west from Massachusetts to California—a 3000-mile, coast-to-coast journey.
- Another would imagine traveling east across the Atlantic Ocean to Spain, about 4,700 miles.
- Give each student a copy of the [The Terrain and Its Meaning for Travelers](#) handout, and have them complete the questions on Page 1 for their destination.

Come together after 5 minutes, and take their responses and ideas, jotting them on the board as a record. Students will likely discuss the attractions of the place (varied), transportation, money to travel, places to stay, currency (for Spain), language issues, and the challenges of being in an unfamiliar place.

Transition from these current-day challenges to the challenges of long-distance travel in the past.

Slide 3: Remind students of their analysis of Asia's geography in Unit 1. If available, have students take out the geographical map they created during Unit 1 Lessons 2-4 to help them visualize the geographical challenges on the Silk Routes.

Explain that many of the same challenges applied to the old Silk Routes! Discuss some of the features on the student maps and how each creates challenges to travel.

- Mountains: rocky terrain, cold temperatures, steep inclines
- Deserts: extreme heat, lack of water, lack of supplies

Explain that today, we will focus on the dramatic geographic challenges that ancient travelers encountered. We'll do this by "traveling" virtually from Sogdiana in Central Asia to Chang'an in China, a 3,000-mile journey similar to the coast-to-coast trip across the US.

Lesson 3: Geographical Challenges of the Silk Route

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Introduce New Vocabulary

Tell students they need to know a few words before starting their journey.

Slides 4–5: Introduce a key vocabulary word for this lesson: *terrain*.

- Say the word: *terrain*.
- Use the word in context: *The terrain was dry and rugged, making it difficult to cross.*
- Share the student-friendly definition: *land with a particular kind of natural features.*
- Highlight the word's features: *noun, comes from the root word terra (meaning land or ground). Other languages also use the root terre, including Spanish, Haitian Creole, and French.*
- Engage with the word: *What are some examples of terrain? (mountains, rivers, valleys, deserts)*

Have students add an image to their [Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1–8](#) to represent the word *terrain*.

Slides 6–7: Explain that the second word they need to know for this lesson is a type of terrain called an *oasis*.

- Say the word: *oasis*.
- Use the word in context: *Travelers in the desert searched for an oasis to rest and get water for their camels.*
- Share the student-friendly definition: *an area in a desert that has water and plants (A large oasis might be a town.)*
- Highlight the word's features: *The plural form of oasis is oases (o-a-seez).*
- Engage with the word: Some options include inviting students to provide additional examples, restate the definition in their own words, or answer a question using the word. Encourage multilingual learners to translate the word into their home language.
- *Oases have water from natural springs or underground sources.*

Have students add an image to their [Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1–8](#) to represent the word *oasis*.

Lesson 3: Geographical Challenges of the Silk Route

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.



Investigating Sources: Interactive Tour: A Journey through Silk Road Terrain (35 minutes)



TEACHING TIP

It might be helpful to explain to students that very few people (except for migrants) traveled the whole overland route. Most merchants traveled from one trading depot to the next and looped back to their home base. The Silk Routes functioned like a relay. It was goods and ideas that traveled the longest distances across Asia.

INTRODUCE PURPOSE AND PROCESS

Slide 8: Review the Investigating Sources routine. Ask students to turn to Page 2 in their [The Terrain and Its Meaning for Travelers](#) handout. Remind students of the definition of terrain: land with a particular kind of natural features—this exercise introduces the geography along the Silk Road and its impact on traders and travelers.

OBSERVE THE DOCUMENT'S FEATURES

Click the [Historical Trade Routes of the Sogdians](#) from Smithsonian, and project it for the class. Trace the route from Samarkand (in Sogdiana, near our tour's starting point of Afrasiab in present-day Uzbekistan) to Chang'an in China. We will take the northern route around the Taklamakan Desert.

Let students know they will visit all the stops in this interactive tour. Then they will follow the route left to right (west to east), with each stop shown on the map and The Terrain and Its Meaning for Travelers pages of their handout.

Throughout this activity, act as a facilitator of the tour. Encourage students to read the content, look at the physical map, and examine other provided images. As necessary, provide groups with the [Vocabulary Cards Slide Deck](#).

You can advance from stop to stop using the small “Next” and “Back” buttons at the base of the map page. You do not need to read the captions to students as the reading level is advanced. Instead, share the key information summarized in the Teacher Version—this has the main points extracted from the website. Some of it students will also figure out just from close inspection.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Provide students with [The Terrain and Its Meaning for Travelers \(Sentence Frames\)](#). Giving students time to process, question, reflect, and clarify orally helps all students to make meaning with their peers. It also provides necessary oral language practice for expressing their learning before participating in the larger group's Connect part of the routine.

Lesson 3: Geographical Challenges of the Silk Route

Unless otherwise noted, Investigating History is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

READ THE DOCUMENT

In small groups, students should explore each stop and complete the chart in [The Terrain and Its Meaning for Travelers](#).

- Observe: Students should describe which geographical features are present.
- Read: Students should describe the characteristics of the terrain.
- Connect: Students should make inferences from the traveler's perspective of the challenges and opportunities available.

CONNECT TO OUR QUESTION

Take student responses and lead a discussion of what these features could mean for Silk Route travelers, using the notes on the Teacher Version of the document to guide you. This will involve students using historical empathy to consider travelers' perspectives and make inferences. Model an explicit process for thinking about the last question, such as:

For the question about what the terrain might mean for travelers, we want to pay attention to physical features on the map and consider what those features imply. For example, oasis towns look green on the map. This means they must have had water and food, so caravans of traders could stop there and refuel.



TEACHING TIP

For additional background information on geography or to further develop this aspect of the curriculum, see the article "[The Silk Roads and Eurasian Geography](#)" from Silk Road Seattle or the Esri Storymap "[On Foot in the Path of the Silk Road](#)" from Out of Eden Walk, which would make an excellent extension resource or writing prompt. It has beautiful images of Silk Road peoples, cities, and landscapes in modern times.

Deliberately show students how the left side of the website gives a satellite view, while the right side shows the direction to the next stop. Before clicking to the next stop, use these tools to look (and have students look) in the eastward direction you will travel and consider the geographic features you will encounter next. If it helps students see the line of

Lesson 3: Geographical Challenges of the Silk Route

Unless otherwise noted, Investigating History is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

travel and the features, play the transition to the next stop more than once.

Slide 9: After you have visited all the stops and reached Chang'an, ask students to reflect on the journey as a class. What struck them about it?



LEARN MORE

To learn more about the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang (one stop on the tour), see the [Cave Temples of Dunhuang: Buddhist Art on China's Silk Road](#). This provides links to immersive virtual experiences and dazzling video tours.

Students should understand:

- The Silk Road was bordered by mountains to the north and south, including the Himalayas, Karakorum, Kunlun, Tian Shan, and Pamir ranges. The passes through these ranges were often narrow and dangerous, with drops into deep ravines.
- The Silk Road passed through the Gobi Desert, a bleak and inhospitable landscape.
- The Silk Road experienced extreme heat and cold and had infrequent and irregular water supplies.
- The Silk Road was a high, dry terrain with scarce animal forage.
- Transportation was limited to pack animals, and it could take six months to travel from Kashgar to Chang'an.

After some discussion, have them complete the prompt explaining why a geographic feature was challenging to travelers on the Silk Road.

Slide 10: Show students the physical terrain map. Remind students of the map of East Asia they created in Unit 2, Lesson 1. Ask students:

- *What do you remember about the human geography and development of East Asia?*
- *What impact do you think the physical terrain had on the development of the Silk Routes?*



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Use the [Question Language and Literacy Builder](#) to assist and support students while they answer the prompt.

Lesson 3: Geographical Challenges of the Silk Route

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Allow students to turn and discuss their responses. After they talk with a partner, have a few students share their responses with the class.

Revisit the Inquiry Chart (5 minutes)

Slide 11: Revisit the questions students added under the Supporting Question in Lesson 1 as part of their Launching the Question routine and questions from the Wonder column of the Know and Wonder Chart from Lesson 1.

- Ask: *Have any of these questions been answered? Have any new questions come up?*

Give students a few minutes to share their thoughts and ideas with the class. Review the student responses to the geographic challenges prompt in their handout. This will help assess if students understand the impact of the terrain on travel along the Silk Road.

The Terrain and Its Meaning for Travelers (Teacher Version)

Stop 1: Afrasiab (ah-FRAH-see-ahb)

Characteristics of the terrain:

- Fertile river valley (green is the color that indicates water)
- Large mountains due east

Challenges or opportunities:

- Good place to stop and get water and food for travelers and pack animals
- To skirt the mountains, we will have to travel north a bit

Stop 2: Ferghana (fur-GAH-nah) Valley

Characteristics of the terrain:

- Valley of grasslands
- Explain that these grasses are alfalfa grass, rich in nutrients
- Eastward there are mountains on all sides—best route is southward

Challenges or opportunities:

- Easy travel here
- **Ask:** *What kinds of animals might enjoy grazing in these pastures?* The Ferghana Valley was known across Asia for its strong breeds of horses, which the Chinese called “heavenly horses” and were needed for their military.
- Getting over those mountains will be unavoidable now.

Stop 3: Pamir (pah-MEER) Mountains

Characteristics of the terrain:

- Steep mountains with ice and snow

Challenges or opportunities:

- **Ask:** *How do you bring a trade caravan through mountains like this? What do you need to find?* Mountain passes that are lower/easier
- **Ask:** *How much can you carry through?* Goods were limited to what people and animals could carry in these hardest parts of the journey; pack weight mattered. Also, not all animals could traverse here; horses and camels generally could.
- **Ask:** *What are the dangers for travelers here?* See if students can identify: freezing, slipping (pack animals or humans), avalanches, lack of food

Stop 4: Taklamakan (tah-kluh-muh-KAHN) Desert ("Place of no return")**Characteristics of the terrain:**

- Large sandy desert
- Green patches at northern and southern rim of desert: oases
- Large mountain ranges to north and south (feeding the oases with snowmelt)

Challenges or opportunities:

- **Ask:** *What would it be like to travel through a sandy desert? What do you know about desert conditions?* Walking is harder, slower; temperatures are more extreme, cold and hot; there is no shade; wind can create dangerous dust storms; there is no food.
- **Ask:** *What kind of animals could carry heavy loads through sand without drinking much water?* Camels, specifically two-humped Bactrian camels, were well adapted for desert transport.
- **Ask:** *What strategy would you as a traveler use to get through this desert?* Historically, travelers would hopscotch from oasis to oasis. **Define** oasis for students as an area in a desert that has water and plants; it's in their vocabulary too. **Point out** that snowmelt from the mountains north and south of the Taklamakan ran down and created green oases in the desert. (Fun fact: In ancient times, the Tarim River that ran along the northern side of the desert was navigable by boats. Unpleasant fact: The desert was strewn with the bones of people and animals who did not make it across.)

Stop 5: Turfan (tur-FAHN)**Characteristics of the terrain:**

- Another oasis on the northern route
- Set in a valley (can only see the treetops, so it goes lower); mountains provide runoff water.

Challenges or opportunities:

- **Ask:** *What would travelers want in Turfan?* Food!
- This agricultural oasis grew products that became famous in China: mulberry trees, apricots, melons, and grapes.

Stop 6: Dunhuang (DOON-huahng)**Characteristics of the terrain:**

- Dry desert conditions
- **Project** [Slide 2](#) or **show** [this map](#) so students can see that Dunhuang was one town (the main town) where the northern and southern routes around the Taklamakan came together.
- To get to the Chinese heartland from here, there is a string of oases going southeast to follow. **Point out** this corridor through the mountains if students don't see it.

Challenges or opportunities:

- Students have already thought about the challenges of living in dry areas.
- **Explain** that Dunhuang became a center for Buddhist monks and missionaries. Beginning in 366 CE, they carved nearly 500 caves into the cliffs as places for meditation and worship. On the walls, they painted murals to serve as visual representations of the quest for enlightenment (by the Tang dynasty; these also attracted pilgrims). Both the art and the many Buddhist manuscripts stored in the caves were preserved by the dryness of the climate.
- To give students a sense of this unusual site, **show** them the short UNESCO video clip "[Mogao Caves](#)" (2:46) or scroll to the gallery at the end of this *Wikipedia* page: [Mogao Caves](#).

Stop 7: Hexi (HEX-ee) Corridor**Characteristics of the terrain:**

- The corridor goes southeast, with desert to the north and mountains to the south.
- A string of oases to follow

Challenges or opportunities:

- Traffic got funneled through this passageway between the Gobi Desert and mountains.
- **Ask:** *If all or most traffic has to go through the same narrow path, is the route easier or harder to secure? Why?* It was easier for the Chinese government to regulate traffic here. They set up border garrisons and had soldiers guard the critical passage. They also checked travelers' papers and sometimes stopped them if they didn't have permission to travel.

Stop 8: Chang'an (CHAHNG-ahn)**Characteristics of the terrain:**

- A city with large walls
- Flat area with plenty of water

Challenges or opportunities:

- Students know Chang'an as the great Tang capital. It was also the eastern "endpoint" of the Silk Routes, where traders brought their goods to market.
- **Read** half or all of Smithsonian's [description of Chang'an](#) to the class as it is accessible and explains what made the long journey worthwhile.

LESSON 4

Maritime Routes

EQ How does trade affect ideas and culture?

SQ What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Summarize the differences between land and sea trade on the Silk Routes using map and video sources.

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE

Summarize a significant aspect of the maritime Silk Route trade in writing

LESSON OVERVIEW

Beginning in the 7th century CE, long-distance sea routes between China and West Asia opened up, and maritime trade surpassed the scope of land trade. In this lesson, students consider the differences between overland and sea trade by delving into the finds of the Belitung shipwreck—an Arab dhow discovered off the coast of Belitung Island in Indonesia in 1998. They begin by looking closely at a map with sea and land routes and generating questions. Next, they watch a video excerpt that introduces the story of the shipwreck and what it revealed about maritime trade in the year 826 CE. They watch to answer the question of how trade on the sea routes differed from land trade. After capturing the main ideas in the discussion, each student writes a one-sentence summary about maritime trade as revealed by the Belitung discovery.

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T1b.2g, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, RCA-H.6-8.2
See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS

- ☐ [Lesson 4 Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [Maritime Routes Student Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [Extension: The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea](#)
- ☐ [Secrets of the Sea \(Teacher Version\)](#)
- ☐ [Secrets of the Sea](#)
- ☐ [China's Maritime History](#)
- ☐ Lesson 1: Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1-8

VOCABULARY

globalization

Lesson 4: Maritime Routes

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
Activating Prior Knowledge	5
Vocabulary	5
Investigating Sources	30
Wrap Up	10
Optional Extension: The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea	20

Lesson 4: Maritime Routes

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- [Secrets of the Sea \(Sentence Frames\)](#): Supports note-taking and written responses

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Encourage students to use the Sentence Frames handout and add to their notes when the video is paused. Consider allowing students to watch the video on their own with headphones so they can slow it down and use subtitles. Students would benefit from a translated transcript and visual word bank.
- [Look Fors](#): Simple sentences and phrases should include Tier 1 words.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Encourage them to use the Sentence Frames handout and add to their notes when the video is paused. Consider allowing students to watch the video on their own with headphones so they can slow it down and use subtitles. Students would benefit from a translated transcript.
- [Look Fors](#): Simple to compound sentences should use Tier 2 words like *trade* and *cargo*. Notes should be appropriate, and answers should include information from the video and students' own words.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students should be able to complete the activity mostly independently although they can work with a peer to clarify comprehension or watch the video with headphones so they can slow it down and use subtitles if necessary. Encourage students to add to their notes when the video is paused.
- [Look Fors](#): Multiple compound/complex sentences should include more precise Tier 3 academic vocabulary like *globalization* and a greater level of detail.

Lesson 4: Maritime Routes

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Activating Prior Knowledge (5 minutes)

Slide 2: Activate students' prior knowledge by asking: *What do you remember about the challenges and opportunities of the Silk Road terrain?*

Allow students to Think-Pair-Share their responses with partners. After students have had time to share their responses, ask a few students to share what they talked about with their partners with the class.

Slide 3: Capture student responses on a T-chart with the headings:

- Land Routes on the left
- Sea Routes on the right

Explain to students that they will explore the differences between the land and sea trade on the Silk Routes during this lesson.



TEACHING TIP

To learn more about the Spice Routes (an alternative name for the Sea Routes), see the chapter "[What Are the Spice Routes?](#)" from UNESCO's publication *The Trade in Spices*. UNESCO's "[About the Silk Roads](#)" also has many articles on the maritime Silk Roads. A good starting point is "[Quanzhou](#)," or enter "maritime" into the search box. To learn more about China's Maritime history, use the [China's Maritime History](#) resource.

Vocabulary (5 minutes)

Explain to students that they must know a few words before diving into the lesson. Prompt students to reference the Vocabulary handout in their notebooks.

Slide 4: Remind students that they learned the word *maritime* in Grade 6. Provide the definition again (or reteach the word if needed): *related to the sea*.

Explain to students that maritime is a cognate, a word in two languages with similar meaning, spelling, and pronunciation. Share examples for Portuguese, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. Encourage multilingual learners to translate the word into their home language.

Slides 5–6: Introduce the new vocabulary word students need to know for this lesson: *globalization*.

- Say the word: *globalization*.
- Use the word in context: *Globalization includes the exchange of ideas, traditions, and economic activity across borders.*



TEACHING TIP

Use the data gathered from this activity to assess mastery and make any necessary instructional adjustments.

Lesson 4: Maritime Routes

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

- Share the student-friendly definition: *the increasing connectedness and interdependence of world cultures and economies, made possible by trade and technology.*
- Highlight the words' features: *Globalization comes from the Latin roots globus, iza-, and -tion. globus means "compact mass" or the world iza- means "to become" -tion means "action and effect"*
- Engage with the word: *Some options include inviting students to provide additional examples, restate the definition in their own words, or answer a question using the word. Encourage multilingual learners to translate the word into their home language.*

Have students create an image representing the definition, and add it to the [Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1–8](#).



🚩 Investigating Sources (30 minutes)

INTRODUCE PURPOSE AND PROCESS

Slide 7: Review the Investigating Sources routine, and tell students that today, they will investigate the maritime Silk Routes to better understand how they impacted trade on the Silk Routes.

Slide 8: Explain to students that the maritime Silk Routes—the long-distance sea routes across Asia—began to open up in the 7th century. Review the “brief version” of the development of maritime routes on the slide.

Explain that they will investigate a map and video sources. Using the Silk Routes Map, model the Investigating Sources routine.

Slide 9: Click the link on the map image to display the map as large as possible. Then, share the [Maritime Routes Student Slide Deck](#) with students so they can click the zoomable link to view the map themselves.

Explain that this map was created by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO for short) Silk Roads Programme to illustrate the Silk Routes. Explain that when analyzing a map, historians observe the map and its parts, read the map's information, and make connections to what they know.

Lesson 4: Maritime Routes

Unless otherwise noted, Investigating History is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

OBSERVE THE DOCUMENT'S FEATURES

Slide 10: Ask students to look closely and silently at the map for a minute. Then ask:

- *What is the title of this map?*
- *What do you notice about this map?*
- *What place or places are shown?*

READ THE DOCUMENT

Slide 11: Explain that after observing a map to get oriented to what is being shown, historians begin to read the information on the map. Ask students:

- *What does this map show about the maritime Silk Routes?*
 - They connected Europe and SW Asia with SE and E Asia.
 - Routes stopped at many land ports.

As students share their ideas, after each response, ask: *What do you see that makes you think that?*

Encourage students to offer evidence from the map to support their thinking.

CONNECT TO OUR QUESTION

Slide 12: Tell students that the last step of analyzing a map is to make connections to what you know about the history the map represents. Ask students:

- *What do you think it would be like to travel across the oceans and seas?*
- *What can you infer about the geographical challenges and opportunities a traveler would face on the Maritime Silk Routes?*

Slide 13: Invite students to look more closely and make deeper connections:

- *What more can we find?*

Allow this conversation and analysis to unfold for about 5 minutes. Capture student responses on the T-chart created



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Use the [Observe Language and Literacy Builder](#) to assist and support students in the first two steps of the Investigating Sources routine.

Giving them time to process, question, reflect, and clarify orally helps all students to make meaning with their peers. It also provides necessary oral language practice for expressing their learning before participating in the Connect part of the routine with the larger group.

Lesson 4: Maritime Routes

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

earlier.

Lastly, ask students:

- *How useful was this source to our inquiry about the most important goods and ideas that traveled on the Silk Routes?*

Students should use information about the maker, intended audience, and purpose to assess usefulness.

- UNESCO is a reputable organization.
- The purpose was to provide information about the maritime Silk Routes.
- The intended audience includes people interested in the history of the Silk Routes.

Ask students: *How do we know about globalization and global maritime trade in ancient times?*

Maritime archaeology is a major way to explore this part of the past. When ships sink, their wrecks capture a moment in trade history.

Slide 14: Explain to students that we will watch a video about an Arab dhow (a kind of boat) for the next source. During the Tang dynasty, the dhow was wrecked on its return trip. Sailing west from a port in East Asia, it sank off the Indonesian island of Belitung and was only discovered in 1998 by divers searching for sea cucumbers.

Give students the [Secrets of the Sea](#) handout. Explain that they will observe the video as they watch it to answer the questions on their handout. Then, pull up the video and review the information (title, date, maker). Finally, support students in answering the Observe portion of their handout.

Slide 15: Play from minute 2:30 to 12:06 of the Secrets of the Sea video by Asia Society. (The video is already formatted to start at 2:30 and end at 12:06.)

Lesson 4: Maritime Routes

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

While watching the Belitung shipwreck video, students should listen for information about how maritime trade differed from land trade and record notes on their handouts.

Pause the video several times to check for comprehension, highlight key features, and let students jot notes on differences (top part of handout).

- 3:30 ship traveling from starting point to ending point
- 4:08 Arab traders and boats
- 4:20 the cross-section of the loaded boat
- 4:42 comparison of ship cargo weight to camel cargo weight
- 7:40 production and commercial network for ceramics
- 11:02 technological advances

Slide 16: After the video, lead a discussion with students or have them compare observations in small groups. They may note differences such as:

- Sea cargoes were larger because boats could carry more weight
- The factory-like scale of production (Chinese ceramics)
- The intensity of maritime trade (more goods moving, which ultimately meant a more significant impact on cultures and economies)
- The involvement of Arab traders/sailors (and their boats)
- The way one ship could travel the entire route, connecting regions more directly (unlike the overland relay system)
- The risk of shipwreck itself
- The use of technology to travel from port to port

Record student responses on the T-chart created earlier in the lesson. Other responses are possible, too. One point worth adding (not mentioned in the video) is that sea routes were less affected by political instability and were more able to avoid conflict zones that diminished the land trade in the mid-Tang dynasty.

The key historical point is that in the long term, sea trade was faster, cheaper, easier, and more secure, so more goods



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Provide students with [*Secrets of the Sea*](#) ([*Sentence Frames*](#)) to help with this activity. In order to support understanding, you may also provide MLs with a video transcript (accessible via YouTube), and translate it into your students' languages.

Lesson 4: Maritime Routes

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

began to move by boat than camel!

Wrap Up (10 minutes)

Slide 17: Direct students to the summary section of [Secrets of the Sea](#). They should write a one-sentence summary explaining land and sea trade differences on the Silk Routes. Provide examples of summaries and get quick group input on key things they learned from the students' handouts or the T-chart.

Review the one-sentence summary sentence frame and explain what students should fill in. Where needed, students can discuss and work in pairs on their summaries. Circulate and gather a sense of where students are, what they understand, and where challenges are. Take a minute to debrief this with students to clarify anything before the lesson ends.

Optional Extension: The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (20 minutes)

Slide 18: The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, written by an anonymous source believed to have been a Greek merchant in the 1st century of the Common Era, is a wonderful source for helping students understand the maritime Silk Roads. This source looks more fully at the western side of the maritime routes, including coastal Africa, Arabia, and the Indian Ocean. The activity below introduces this remarkable source.

Analyzing a Map with Visual Thinking Strategies

Slide 19: Ask students to look at the image closely and silently for a minute. Ask: *What might be going on in this map?*

As students share their ideas, restate them using conditional language (such as “Ahmed thinks this could be X”) so that other students feel invited to make their interpretations. After each response, ask: *What do you see that makes you say that?*

Encourage students to offer evidence from the image to support their thinking.

Lesson 4: Maritime Routes

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Slide 20: Invite them to look more closely and make deeper connections. Ask: *What more can we find?*

Allow this conversation and analysis to unfold for about 5 minutes. Then, explain that this map shows the locations described in a document known as the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*. A “periplus” (sometimes spelled “periplous,” as it is on the map) is a descriptive account of a voyage. In ancient times, the name “Erythraean Sea” described the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean as a single maritime area.

Slide 21: Provide some context about the origin and authorship of the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*. Explain that the *Periplus* comprises 66 entries; most are about a paragraph long, though some are shorter. Ask students:

- *For what voyage, large or small, in your life could you create a periplus?*
- *What would you title it?*

Have students turn and talk with a neighbor or in small groups, and invite a few students to share.

Investigating Interactions in the Indian Ocean Trade Network Using a Primary Source

Slide 22: Explain that for this activity, they will work with a partner to read and analyze two excerpts and think about how this object (the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*) tells the story of the Indian Ocean.

Assign students to work in pairs, and provide them with copies of the [Extension: The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea](#) handout and tablets or laptops to access the map: [Names, Routes and Locations of the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea](#). Have students read each excerpt and answer the questions on the handout with a partner.

Bring the class back together, and discuss their responses to the questions on the Extension Activity handout. Use this opportunity to answer questions or clarify misunderstandings.

The [Extension: The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea \(Teacher Version\)](#) will help you to guide the discussion.



TEACHING TIP

You may want to point out to students that some names on the map aren't spelled the same way as in the excerpts. Specifically, Myos-hormus and Barygaza are shown in the excerpt as Myos Hormos and Barigaza on the map. Ptolemais of the Hunts from the excerpt is shown as Ptolemais of the Hunt on the map.

Lesson 4: Maritime Routes

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Secrets of the Sea (Teacher Version)

Secrets of the Sea: A Tang Shipwreck and Early Trade in Asia (2017) by the Asia Society

How was maritime trade different from land trade on the Silk Routes?

Observe

What type of video is this?	This video is informational and includes an interview about an actual historical event.
What is happening in the video?	This video aims to share information about the Belitung shipwreck and what historians have learned about early trade in Asia.
What does this video say about the Silk Routes?	The Asia Society made this video in 2017.
How is this source useful to our inquiry?	This source is relevant because it was created by the Asia Society, a reputable source of historical information based on its contributions to museums and research. This source is helpful because it is intended for people who want to learn more about trade history in Asia.

Read

Sea cargoes were larger because boats could carry more weight.	One ship could travel the entire route, connecting regions more directly.	Sailors use technology to travel from port to port.
Arab sailors and their boats were used for the trade routes.	More goods began to be produced because ships could carry more weight.	Because the maritime trade was moving more, faster, there was a more significant impact on cultures and economies.

Connect

What is one thing that surprised you about the Belitung wreck or maritime trade at the time?

How is the Belitung wreck an example of early globalization?

Students should understand that the shipwreck showcases a vast collection of Chinese goods (ceramics, gold, silver) on board a ship that originated in the Middle East, demonstrating the extensive maritime trade network that existed between these regions during the 9th century, where goods, culture, and ideas were exchanged across long distances through sea routes, effectively connecting the East and West Asian economies and societies.

One-sentence summary

Write a one-sentence summary explaining the differences between land and sea trade on the Silk Routes.

Land trade on the Silk Routes was ____, which meant ____, while sea trade was ____, which meant ____.

Students' answers should reflect an understanding that: the primary difference lies in the volume of goods that could be transported, with sea routes allowing for significantly larger quantities due to the greater carrying capacity of ships, while land routes, often traversing harsh terrain like deserts and mountains, were limited by the size of caravans and faced greater risks from bandits; however, land routes offered more direct access to certain inland regions not reachable by sea.

Possible responses:

*Land trade on the Silk Routes was **carried by caravans**, which meant **that few goods could travel**, while sea trade **utilized ships**, which meant **more goods could be carried for trade**.*

*Land trade on the Silk Routes **involved crossing challenging terrain**, which meant **it took a long time for goods to travel between cities**, while sea trade **utilized ships**, which meant **goods for trade would arrive faster**.*

Extension: The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (Teacher Version)

Directions: Read each excerpt, and answer the questions on the handout with a partner.

The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* was written by an anonymous author, believed to be a Greek merchant who lived in the 1st century CE. A **periplus** is a descriptive account of a voyage. In ancient times, the name “Erythraean Sea” described the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, and Indian Ocean as a single maritime area. As you analyze the two excerpts, use [Names, Routes and Locations of the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea](#) to locate the places described.

Note: If you do not have access to a class set of laptops or tablets, a [print copy of the map](#) is available. If necessary, the activity could be completed as a whole class activity using the print map in conjunction with the projected version. However, the activity will be more engaging if the students can view the map digitally.

Excerpt #1: *Into these places [**Mios Hormos, Berenice, Ptolemais of the Hunt, and Adulis**] there are imported Indian iron, and steel, and Indian cotton cloth . . . and girdles (belts with tassels), and coats of [animal] skin and mallow-colored (pale purple) cloth, and . . . muslins (light-weight cotton cloth), and lac (a red dye that comes from the scales of insects in India). There are exported from these places [**Mios Hormos, Berenice, Ptolemais of the Hunt, and Adulis**] ivory, and tortoise-shell and rhinoceros-horn.*

*And ships from . . . **Barygaza** bringing to these far-side market-towns [**Opone**] the products of their own places; wheat, rice, clarified butter (butter with the milk fat removed), sesame oil, cotton cloth, and girdles (belts with tassels) and honey from the reed called sacchari (likely sugar cane) . . .*

1. Historians believe the author of the *Periplus* was a Greek merchant. Knowing this, how would you describe the author’s purpose and intent in writing this document?

The author’s purpose is to describe the trade networks and products in the trade network of the Erythraean Sea. His intent is to educate other merchants and perhaps make some money by selling the book.

2. Locate Mios Hormos, Ptolemais of the Hunt, Adulis, and Opone on the map. How would you describe their location?

They are along the northeast coast of Africa, very close to Arabia. They are all along—or very close to—the Arabian Gulf.

3. Locate Barygaza on the map. How would you describe its location?

Barygaza (Barigaza) is located on the West coast of India across from the Arabian Peninsula.

4. What two regions are trading with each other in Excerpt #1?

Northern and Eastern Africa are trading with India.

5. According to Excerpt #1, what are some products that are traded? What does trading a particular type of goods say about the societies that are trading? Provide at least **two** specific examples by filling in the blanks below.

Goods being traded include iron, steel, cotton cloth, belts (decorated), coats (animal skins) red dye, tortoiseshell, and rhinoceros horn. (Iron and steel were probably used for tools or weapons.) The items appear to be luxury items more than necessities—perhaps to use as personal ornaments. The fact that the societies on both sides of the trade network consumed luxury (particularly on the African side) indicates that their societies had considerable wealth. It also may indicate that they shipped some of these items to the Middle East and Europe, while the Indians may have supplied Russia with goods from Africa.

Excerpt #2:

*Beyond the gulf of Baraca is that of **Barygaza** and the coast of the country of **Ariaca**, which is the beginning of the Kingdom of Nambanus and of all India. . . . The metropolis of this country is **Minnagara**, from which much cotton cloth is brought down to **Barygaza**. In these places, there remain even to the present time signs of the expedition of Alexander, such as ancient shrines, walls of forts, and great wells. . . .*

6. Locate Barygaza, Ariaca, and Minnagara on the map. Fill in the blanks below with one of the three locations to describe the relative location of each.

a) Minnagara is located in modern-day Pakistan along the Indus River.

b) Ariaca is located in Western India.

c) Barygaza is located on the West coast of India, across from the Arabian Peninsula.

7. Why do you think that cotton cloth travels from Minnagara to Barygaza?

It travels to Barygaza because Barygaza is on the coast; from there it can be shipped by sea.

8. Where does the cotton cloth travel once it leaves Barygaza?

It is shipped across the sea to Cana in Arabia and then through the Arabian Gulf, on its way to Europe.

9. How does this object (an ancient travel log, *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*) tell the story of these places?

This may be described as the story of the Indian Ocean, where the log tells a story of vibrant trade. Students may describe the story of trading connections between Africa and India. Probe deeper on this question to ask about the types of goods that are exchanged, many of them luxury items. For example, what do these tell them about the level of wealth in the early societies of East Africa and India? Students may also offer that it tells the story of Alexander the Great's invasion of India. Ask why they think the author included this detail even though the purpose of the document appears to be to describe trade networks. Allow students to share other ideas and observations that they have as well, encouraging them to support their thoughts with evidence.

Bonus Question

If you have time, discuss this with your partner and other groups that are done.

10. What can we **not** learn about the Indian Ocean (Erythraean Sea) trade network from this document?

- The personal experiences and relationships of the people who traded the items
- The perspectives of people who are not Greek
- Information about the ideas, culture, or religious beliefs that moved along the trade networks, along with the products. These were not for sale, but could readily be adopted by anyone who found them interesting or useful. Share that in the next part of the lesson they will look at how interactions through trade led to the exchange of belief systems and ideas.

LESSON 5

Cultural Diffusion Along the Silk Routes

EQ How does trade affect ideas and culture?

SQ What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Summarize the differences between land and sea trade on the Silk Routes using map and video sources.

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE

Explain the relationship between religion and cultural diffusion using evidence orally and in writing.

LESSON OVERVIEW

Having considered how trade was impacted by the challenges of Silk Route geography in previous lessons, this lesson centers on the unit's Essential Question: *How does trade affect ideas and culture?* Students view a video that explores the concept of cultural diffusion and the idea that cultures are not self-contained: they spread and influence others, who adopt or adapt them for their own reasons. Students will review previous knowledge about the spread of innovation and foundational beliefs from the Tang dynasty. To better understand how culture is spread, students will examine artifacts to explore how major religions spread along the Silk Road using the jigsaw strategy. Then they are ready to summarize their response to the inquiry posed by the Essential Question orally.

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T1b.2g, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, SLCA.6-8.1
See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS

- ☐ [Lesson 5 Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [Cultural Diffusion Student Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [Introduction to Cultural Diffusion](#)
- ☐ [Cultural Diffusion on the Silk Routes Jigsaw](#)
- ☐ [Cultural Diffusion on the Silk Routes Jigsaw \(Teacher Version\)](#)
- ☐ [Silk Road Video Translation](#)
- ☐ [Silk Road Video Transcript](#)
- ☐ Lesson 1: Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1-8
- ☐ scissors

VOCABULARY

cultural diffusion
tolerance

Lesson 5: Cultural Diffusion Along the Silk Routes

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
Activator and Video	10
Introduction to Cultural Diffusion	10
Investigating Sources: Cultural Diffusion Jigsaw Activity	20
Revisit the Inquiry Chart	5
Exit Ticket	5

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- [Summarize Language and Literacy Builder](#): Helps to identify a main idea and supporting details
- [Cultural Diffusion on the Silk Routes Jigsaw \(Sentence Starters\)](#): Supports the collection of evidence and written responses

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer, if possible, to identify key information in the video, and encourage them to use the Silk Road Video Translation or Silk Road Video Transcript. They should fill in the Introduction to Cultural Diffusion handout during the class discussion. Students may benefit from a shorter version of the reading, with key information needed for the Sentence Frames handout highlighted or bolded, and a bilingual dictionary.
- [Look Fors](#): Complete sentences using the frames provided should include relevant Tier 1 and 2 words. Students may share information with their home group by showing them their written answers as they may be unable to read all sentences aloud.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer, if possible, to identify key information in the video, and encourage students to use the Silk Road Video Translation or Silk Road Video Transcript. They should fill in the Introduction to Cultural Diffusion handout during the class discussion. Students may benefit from a shorter version of the reading, with key information needed for the Sentence Frames handout highlighted or bolded as necessary.
- [Look Fors](#): Complete sentences using the frames provided should include relevant Tier 2 words. Students should be able to read their sentences aloud to their home group.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students should be able to complete this task mostly independently. Students can use more complex sentence frames from the Summarize LLB as a guide if needed.
- [Look Fors](#): Compound/complex sentences should reference the text and include more precise academic Tier 3 vocabulary like *missions* and *integrate* and a greater level of detail.



ADVANCE PREPARATION

Create the home and expert groups before class to ensure strategic grouping of students. This lesson will utilize the Inquiry Chart. Place the Inquiry Chart in a location where all students can view it.

Lesson 5: Cultural Diffusion Along the Silk Routes

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Activator and Video (10 minutes)

Slide 2: Ask students what they remember about the tangible goods traded or exchanged on the Silk Routes.

If necessary, revisit the students' understanding of the word *tangible* (introduced in Grade 6, Unit 3, or through prior knowledge): *something that can be touched, a thing you can hold*.

Slide 3: Explain that along with goods, many other intangible things traveled: ideas, cultures, languages, technologies, and skills. Tell students they should listen for these intangibles as they watch the video and write them on their [Introduction to Cultural Diffusion](#) handout as they watch.

Pause the video to allow students to write in the intangibles that moved with trade. These appear at the following points:

- 2:58 (crossbow technology—China or Central Asia)
- 3:30 (Buddhism—India, Islam—Arabia, gunpowder technology—China)
- 3:48 (magnetic compass technology—China).

Slide 4: Debrief the video by asking students: *What did you notice about the spread of ideas and culture?*

Ensure that they understand the following points:

- The exchange of goods like silk, spices, and other valuable items also carried ideas, technologies, and beliefs across continents. For instance, the Silk Road contributed to the spread of Buddhism from India to China and other parts of East Asia.
- As merchants, travelers, and scholars interacted, they shared customs, art, and knowledge. This blending enriched the cultures of regions involved in the trade network, resulting in hybrid traditions and innovations.
- The Silk Road facilitated the transfer of technologies like the crossbow and magnetic compass from China to the West, demonstrating how practical innovations traveled along with cultural and religious ideas.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Support understanding by providing MLs with [Silk Road Video Translation](#) or [Silk Road Video Transcript](#) of the video.

They can highlight and follow during the video as they listen. They can be prompted to write notes in their best language for comprehending and interpreting.

Lesson 5: Cultural Diffusion Along the Silk Routes

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Introduction to Cultural Diffusion (10 minutes)

Introduce today's lesson by explaining that people and their goods were not the only things that moved on the Silk Routes. Wherever they went, people brought their cultures.

Slide 5: Ask students to turn and talk to remind a partner about the different aspects of culture (languages, religions, traditions, arts, laws, habits, etc.). Record some responses on the board.

Explain that these are not things that stay frozen in place because other people become interested and adopt or adapt them in various ways. Today, we'll study how cultural diffusion worked on the Silk Routes.

Slides 6–7: Introduce the first vocabulary word students need to know for this lesson: *cultural diffusion*.

- Say the word: *cultural diffusion*.
- Use the word in context: *When you eat pasta, you are benefiting from cultural diffusion.*
- Share the student-friendly definition: *the spreading out and merging of pieces from different cultures.*
- Highlight the word's features: *Foods, languages, beliefs, technologies, music, and art can diffuse across cultures.*
- Engage with the word: *Some options include inviting students to provide additional examples, restate the definition in their own words, or answer a question using the word. Encourage multilingual learners to translate the word into their home language.*
- *What is one way that cultural diffusion has shaped YOUR life?*

Allow students to share with a small group or the whole class. (If they need help, prompt them by asking how another culture has influenced their life.) Direct students to update their [Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1–8](#) with an image to represent cultural diffusion.

Slide 8: These statues date from the same period as our map, specifically the first or second century CE. Ask:

Lesson 5: Cultural Diffusion Along the Silk Routes

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

- *How do these statues from the Roman and Kushan Empires show cultural diffusion? What is similar about them?*

Students may notice the toga-style robes, curly hair, or similar gaze (serious, confident, calm).

- *How do you think these similarities happened? Whose artistic style influenced whom?*

If they look at the dates, they will have a clue, as the statue of Emperor Augustus is likely earlier. Roman artistic ideas (which had earlier spread from Greece) traveled on the Silk Routes. (They also traveled with Alexander the Great's invasion into the region of Gandhara, but students do not know that story yet.)

Slide 9: Connect the idea of cultural diffusion to what students learned in Unit 2, Lessons 20–21 about the spread of innovation and foundational beliefs from the Tang dynasty. If student poster summaries are still displayed, allow students to reference them to answer the question. Ask:

- *What do you remember about China's foundational belief systems and innovations, and why did they spread across the region?*

Possible responses:

- Confucianism and Buddhism spread for spiritual, practical, and missionary reasons. Rulers, for example, welcomed beliefs that boosted their authority or prestige.
- Governing institutions: China led the way in developing functional systems of governing an empire through law codes, bureaucracy, and an education (exam) system that selected for talent or merit. Other states learned from its approach and borrowed what they found useful.
- Cultural innovations: China dominated the cultural landscape with its writing system, arts and literature, and city planning. Elites in other states showed their sophistication by adopting (and adapting) Chinese forms.

Explain that the spread of belief systems was a significant example of cultural diffusion on the Silk Routes. Religious beliefs of the peoples of the Silk Road changed radically over

Lesson 5: Cultural Diffusion Along the Silk Routes

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

time and were largely due to the effects of travel and trade on the Silk Road itself.



Investigating Sources: Cultural Diffusion Jigsaw Activity (20 minutes)

Slide 10: Review the Investigating Sources routine. Tell students that today, they will investigate the spread of religion to better understand cultural diffusion on the Silk Road. They will also examine artifacts to explore how major religions spread along the Silk Road.

Slide 11: Distribute the [Cultural Diffusion on the Silk Routes Jigsaw](#) handout to students. Inform them that they will work in groups using a special strategy called a jigsaw.

Explain that you are assigned to a home group and an expert group during a jigsaw. Everyone in the home group will investigate a different source. You will work in your expert group to learn about your source and become an expert.

Each person in the expert group will be responsible for reporting on their source to their home group. At the end of the activity, each group will share what they have learned.

Assign each student a number and assign them to a “home group” of four. Create “expert groups” of students from different “home groups” who will investigate the same source. Ensure that expert groups are heterogeneous to provide support for all learners. Give each expert group a number based on what was assigned to home groups.

- Group 1: Christianity
- Group 2: Zoroastrianism
- Group 3: Islam
- Group 4: Manichaeism

Review the activity directions, and reinforce how you want the expert group to collaborate.

- The group should spend time reading, discussing, and helping each other understand the religion and its spread.

Slide 12: Use student knowledge of Buddhism and Slide 12 to model the routine in the [Cultural Diffusion on the Silk Routes](#)



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Support MLs to by distributing the [Cultural Diffusion on the Silk Routes Jigsaw \(Sentence Starters\)](#).

Lesson 5: Cultural Diffusion Along the Silk Routes

Unless otherwise noted, Investigating History is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

[Jigsaw](#) handout. The teacher guide can support your model.

Send students to their expert groups. Then allow them to explore and look for evidence to explain how religion contributed to cultural diffusion on the Silk Road.

After 10 minutes, have students return to their home groups to discuss what they learned in the expert groups.

Slide 13: Discuss the rules for reconvening into home groups, and guide each expert on reporting the information learned.

- Each "expert" takes turns sharing the source they were initially given with their home group. The others ask questions to ensure everyone understands.

Allow students to discuss what they learned in their expert groups. Remind students that they are compiling evidence on the summary chart to explain the impact of trade on cultural diffusion along the Silk Route.

Slide 14: Based on what you have read and viewed, what was trade's impact on cultural diffusion? Possible responses:

- Trade along routes like the Silk Road impacted how different cultures shared ideas, religions, art, technologies, and even languages. This led to a more connected and diverse society across the continent.
- Traders didn't just bring goods; they also shared their cultural practices, beliefs, and art with new places.
- Religions like Buddhism and Islam spread through trade. Buddhist monks and Muslim traders played big roles in spreading these beliefs.
- Different regions shared art styles and techniques, influencing local art and architecture.
- Important inventions like papermaking, gunpowder, and printing spread across Asia and beyond.
- Trading centers became places where many different cultures interacted and mixed. For example, Buddhism spread from India to East Asia, and China shared inventions like papermaking and gunpowder with the West.
- The Silk Route helped spread Buddhism from India to China, brought Chinese silk to the West, and shared art styles between Central Asia and Europe.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Support MLs to summarize their findings using [Summarize Language and Literacy Builder](#).

Lesson 5: Cultural Diffusion Along the Silk Routes

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

- The maritime trade spread Buddhism from India, influencing the region's art, buildings, and religious practices.
- Arab traders brought Islam to parts of Southeast Asia, leading to the growth of Muslim communities there.

Slides 15–16: Conclude the activity by highlighting that the Silk Routes were places where people encountered many different cultures and came to practice *tolerance*, our second vocabulary word for this lesson.

- Say the word: *tolerance*.
- Use the word in context: *The Silk Road is known for tolerance and coexistence of followers of different religions and cultures.*
- Share the student-friendly definition: *willingness to accept feelings, habits, or beliefs that are different from your own.*
- Highlight the word's features: *Synonyms for tolerance include acceptance, fairness, and patience.*
- Engage with the word: *Some options include inviting students to provide additional examples, restate the definition in their own words, or answer a question using the word. Encourage multilingual learners to translate the word into their home language.*
- *What are some examples of people practicing tolerance on the Silk Road?*

Have students add an image to [Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1–8](#) that represents tolerance.

Revisit the Inquiry Chart (5 minutes)

Slide 17: Review the questions from the Launching the Question routine. Ask students: *Which questions can we answer now?*



Exit Ticket (5 minutes)

Slide 18: Tell students: *Think about what you have learned about the effect trade has on ideas and culture, and complete the following sentence stems:*

I used to think...

Now I think...

This activity can be written individually or shared orally with the class.

Cultural Diffusion on the Silk Routes Jigsaw (Teacher Version)

Directions: Use this handout to record evidence of cultural diffusion on the Silk Road.

Group Roles: You will be divided into groups, with each group focusing on one religion:

- Christianity
- Zoroastrianism
- Islam
- Manichaeism

Expert Group Tasks: Meet with others assigned to the same religion to research and discuss its spread along the Silk Routes.

- Use the guiding questions below to focus your research and discussions.
- Create visual aids: Draw or annotate maps to show the religion's diffusion along the Silk Routes.

Home Group Tasks: Return to your original group to share your findings and put together a summary of cultural diffusion and its connection to trade.

- Share findings from your expert group.
- Have a discussion to answer the following questions:
 - How did trade help people share goods, ideas, and beliefs?
 - What helped religions spread to new places?
 - How did these religions affect the cultures and societies along the Silk Road?
- Write a group summary: In a paragraph, summarize how trade on the Silk Routes fostered cultural diffusion, using examples from each religion.
- Class discussion: Present your map and summary to the class.

Observe: Scan your assigned source to answer the following questions:

Answers will vary.

1. What do you notice about this source?

The source includes text, images, and maps about Buddhism.

2. What is the purpose of this source?

The purpose of this source is to explain how religion spread on the Silk Routes.

3. How could this source be useful in helping you learn about how religion spread?

This source may be useful because it specifically discusses how the religion spread.

Read: Work with your expert group to answer questions about the religion assigned to your group in the first column: “Expert Group Religion.” Then return to your home group to share what you learned, and write down what other members of your group learned about the religions they studied in the three “Home Group Religion” columns.

Modeled Example <u>Buddhism</u>	Expert Group Religion <u>Islam</u>	Home Group Religion <u>Christianity</u>	Home Group Religion <u>Zoroastrianism</u>	Home Group Religion <u>Manichaeism</u>
Where and when did this religion begin? The religion began in the 3rd century BCE.	The religion began in the 7th century.	The religion began in 30 CE.	The religion began in the 500s BCE.	The religion began in the 200s CE.
What were the religion's teachings? One of Buddhism's religious teachings was that the key to happiness is to be kind to others, avoid hurting anyone, and understand that everything changes.	One of its main teachings was belief in one god. This religion significantly impacted the region's culture, society, economy, and art. It also boosted trade and economic growth along the Silk Routes.	One of its main teachings was the belief in one god, or monotheism. This religion left behind records, but its influence faded because it came from a foreign land.	One of its main teachings was about good versus evil and the afterlife. This religion had a major impact on Asian culture and was the state religion of Persian empires and dynasties.	One of its main teachings offered salvation to those who were deep believers. This religion had a major impact on shaping Chinese salvationist movements like the White Lotus Sect. It also left a lasting mark on local beliefs and art in China.
How did the religion spread? Buddhism spread through monasteries, converting merchants who spread the faith as they traveled.	It spread from the Arabian Peninsula to coastal cities in India, China, and Southeast Asia. It was spread by Muslim merchants traveling to China along the maritime routes.	It spread from Rome to Persia, Central Asia, and China. It was spread by missionaries and merchants who established communities in cities along the Silk Route.	It spread from ancient Iran to Central Asia and parts of China. It was spread by Persian and Sogdian traders who established communities that influenced local populations.	It was spread through trade and missionary work. Manichaean texts were translated into different languages, which helped it to spread.

Modeled Example <u>Buddhism</u>	Expert Group Religion <u>Islam</u>	Home Group Religion <u>Christianity</u>	Home Group Religion <u>Zoroastrianism</u>	Home Group Religion <u>Manichaeism</u>
Which cities or regions became centers for the religion? Oasis towns and China became centers for Buddhism.	The Arabian Peninsula, India, China, and Southeast Asia became centers for Islam.	Nestorian communities in Samarkand and Chang'an became centers for Christianity.	Ancient Iran, Central Asia, and parts of China were centers for Zoroastrianism.	India, Mesopotamia, Iran, Central Asia, and China became centers for Manichaeism.
How did trade impact cultural diffusion on the Silk Road? As Buddhism spread along the Silk Road, it influenced the culture (arts and literature) of the regions it reached. Traditions of Buddhism continue in places like China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia.	As Islam spread through trade, many people were converted to Islam. Muslim traders also influenced the language, food, architecture, and culture of the region.	Nestorianism spread along trading routes. In China there are historical records of the religion's existence.	Persian traders established communities and spread Zoroastrian ideas and practices.	Sogdian traders translated Manichaean texts into local languages. Because of the translations, there were lasting effects in China, where the Uyghurs adopted it as the official state religion.
How did this source help you understand cultural diffusion? Answers will vary.	Answers will vary.	Answers will vary.	Answers will vary.	Answers will vary.

LESSON 6

Travel on the Silk Routes (Part 1)

- EQ

How does trade affect ideas and culture?
- SQ

What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE
Explain the relevance of multiple sources for answering questions about the goods, ideas, and people involved in Silk Road interactions in the first millennium.	Explain the relevance of historical sources to historical questions by citing specific evidence orally and in writing.

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students continue to investigate Silk Routes sources and evaluate their relevance for answering different questions. They complete their Graphic Organizer with evidence relating to their questions about goods, ideas, and people who traveled the routes in the first millennium. Then, they participate in a debriefing discussion, sharing findings on one of their sub-questions and writing an explanatory paragraph that answers one of them.

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T1b.2g, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, RCA-H.6-8.1, WCA.6-8.9
See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS
☐ Lesson 6 Slide Deck ☐ Travel on the Silk Routes (Part 1) Student Slide Deck ☐ Investigation Questions and Source Analysis (Teacher Version) ☐ Investigation Questions and Source Analysis ☐ Lesson 1: Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1-8

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
Silk Road Travel Self-Assessment	10
Investigating Sources: Inquiry Questions and Source Analysis	35
Closing	5

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- [Observe Language and Literacy Builder](#) Assists and supports students in the first two steps of the Investigating Sources routine
- [Question Language and Literacy Builder](#): Supports inquiry language for creating questions
- [Investigation Questions and Source Analysis \(Sentence Starters\)](#) Supports question generation and note-taking to discover evidence

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Students will use the Sentence Starters handout and the Question LLB to create questions for Slides 4 and 5. For the source analysis task, provide a translated version of the slides and fewer slides to analyze and/or provide a guide showing some slides that would support each question to focus on.
- [Look Fors](#): Students should be an active member of their group and complete sections of the organizer with their own notes and those of group members. Answers should include Tier 1 and 2 words from the sources and possibly words from the Graphic Organizer.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- Students will use the Sentence Starters handout and the Question LLB to create questions for Slides 4 and 5. Students may need some translation support. For the source analysis task, provide a translated version of the slides and fewer slides to analyze. Encourage students to use words from the sources and the Graphic Organizer.
- [Look Fors](#): Students should be an active member of their group and complete sections of the organizer with their own notes and those of group members. Answers should include Tier 1 and 2 words from the sources and the vocabulary.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students may use the Question LLB to create questions but should be able to complete the source analysis task with minimal support although it may take them longer, so focusing on fewer sources may be necessary.
- [Look Fors](#): Writing should include more precise Tier 2 and 3 academic vocabulary and a greater level of detail.

Lesson 6: Travel on the Silk Routes (Part 1)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.



TEACHING TIP

While this pair of lessons is designed to take two class periods, it may make sense to spread them out over three days, depending on students' familiarity with source work and reading levels, homework policies, the length of the class period, or other factors.

Another way to customize the lessons to fit your available time is to trim down the slide deck. This can be done purposefully to enable students to answer questions in all three columns of their organizer.

Silk Road Travel Self-Assessment (10 minutes)

Slide 2: Have students line up in the classroom. Explain that you will read a series of questions. Students will take a step forward if their answer is yes. Ask students the following questions:

- *Are you someone who...*
 - *learns words from new languages quickly?* (Discuss if anyone speaks more than one language and what challenges are faced when learning a new language.)
 - *enjoys hiking in the mountains?*
 - *wants to visit faraway places?* (Discuss if anyone has ever moved or traveled to a faraway place and what challenges can be faced when operating in a new culture or location.)
 - *is comfortable taking risks?*
 - *enjoys the company of large animals?*
 - *likes to dance?*
 - *can entertain yourself for long periods of time without using technology?*
 - *has a good sense of direction?*
 - *excels at self-defense (physical)?*
 - *likes to bargain?*

After asking all the questions, discuss the results based on each student's location in the room.

- Nearest to starting point: Silk Road adventures may not be for you. Consider farming or opening an inn for travelers instead.

Lesson 6: Travel on the Silk Routes (Part 1)

Unless otherwise noted, Investigating History is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

- In the middle: Your skills on the road could be valuable; consider traveling but only in a large caravan.
- Farthest from the starting point: You can do this! Be sure to get your travel passes before you depart.

Slide 3: Remind students of the Cluster Supporting Question: *What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?*

Explain to students that they will investigate today and tomorrow to learn more about the people, goods, and ideas that spread along the Silk Routes.



Investigating Sources: Inquiry Questions and Source Analysis (35 minutes)

INTRODUCE PURPOSE AND PROCESS

Slide 4: Review the Investigating Sources routine. Remind students that historians construct knowledge by learning to ask and trying to answer questions about the past. Explain that today, they will generate and answer questions by investigating sources.

Give all students the [Investigation Questions and Source Analysis](#) handout, and form them into groups of three. Explain that the first step of our inquiry involves asking open-ended questions about the goods, ideas, and people moving on the Silk Road.

Slide 5: Review what constitutes an open-ended question, and ask each group to write smaller or more detailed questions about the topic at the top of each column. These questions concern goods (tangibles), ideas (intangibles), and people moving on the Silk Routes.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Provide ML students with the [Investigation Questions and Source Analysis \(Sentence Starters\)](#) for this activity.

Lesson 6: Travel on the Silk Routes (Part 1)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

OBSERVE THE DOCUMENT'S FEATURES

After 10 minutes, call them back together, and take responses in one long list. Then ask them to consider which questions might be best for shedding light on the main question in each column.

Note: Here you may need to steer their choices somewhat with prompt questions, knowing what kinds of sources they will soon encounter to answer them. Some sub-question topics that might work well include (this list is not exhaustive!):

- Goods: uses, types, how moved, local specialties
- Ideas: skills, technologies, religions, languages, cultures
- People: What kinds of things were they doing (jobs/responsibilities)? Why did they travel, and how much choice was involved?

Pull the class back together, and view the total list of questions. Decide as a class which two in each column seem most helpful, interesting, or essential to answer, and star these. Have students add the starred questions to the left column of the [Investigation Questions and Source Analysis](#) handout on Pages 2, 3, and 4.

Explain that their work for the remainder of this lesson and the next one is to find answers to their questions in the sources they are examining. Most of these are primary sources from the “heyday” of the Silk Routes.

Slide 6: Students should be reminded that having many early sources is quite unusual. Conditions in the Tarim Basin and other deserts—with their dry air, salty soil, and cold winters—are ideal for preserving things. Thus, thousands of sources were preserved (often unintentionally). These give us a window into how people lived and traded on the Silk Routes and make it possible to “do history!”

Slide 7: Before looking at sources, explain that one challenge historians face is figuring out which sources are relevant to their question—which sources relate to or shed light on a particular topic. They think about what sources will help them answer their question.

Slide 8: Provide students with a model for a sample question: *What skills or technologies emerged?*



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Use the [Observe Language and Literacy Builder](#) to assist and support students in the first two steps of the Investigating Sources routine.

Giving them time to process, question, reflect, and clarify orally helps all students to make meaning with their peers. It also provides necessary oral language practice for expressing their learning before participating in the larger group's Connect part of the routine.

Lesson 6: Travel on the Silk Routes (Part 1)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

- We can search the sources for terms like “skill,” “technology,” or specific newly invented processes.
- Additionally, students should look for visual hints; if they encounter anything unfamiliar (such as glass), it may suggest the existence of a new technology (like glassmaking).

As they identify helpful sources, they will need to write the letter and type of source (for instance, G: glass bowls) in the middle column of Pages 2, 3, and 4, then describe the evidence in the column on the right (e.g., glassmaking was a Roman technology, or art, and people wanted Roman glass in China).

- Share the [Travel on the Silk Routes \(Part 1\) Student Slide Deck](#) with students, or print the slides as a packet for them.
- Digital sharing may be optimal because viewing the sources in color will be helpful.
- Have students take out their [Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1–8](#), which they will need for this exercise.

When sorting through these sources, students must decide which ones help answer their questions and pay careful attention to those while also deciding which ones do not. This involves skimming textual sources and looking at visual ones, sometimes only briefly.

There may be questions not answered by any of these sources; teachers can help groups in that situation conduct research online to find answers (promising websites are offered below and listed for students’ use at the end of the deck on Slide 27).

Slide 9: To help students get started, read Source A aloud. This is the most challenging source in the batch. Explain to students that to answer these questions, they will need to:

- Read the texts and captions, not only scan the images.
- Make inferences from what they read and see—important things are not always stated outright.
- Pay attention to clues of time and place.

Pause here, and for practice, have student groups decide if Source A is relevant to any of their questions. If so, they can

Lesson 6: Travel on the Silk Routes (Part 1)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

fill in the remaining columns. Ask students who thought it was relevant to respond to the prompt: "This source is about... It is relevant to our question because we asked about..."

Next, invite those who believe it's not relevant to raise their hands and explain: "This source lacks relevance because it discusses...whereas we inquired about..."

Explain that this latter group would ordinarily move on to the next source quickly. However, for this first source, check their response against your class questions, and see if you agree. If you (as a teacher) see connections, help them consider the source from other vantage points before quickly dismissing it.

Students can continue through the collection in this fashion. As you circulate to support them, the [Investigation Questions and Source Analysis \(Teacher Version\)](#) may be helpful.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

To support ML students, work closely with their groups to ensure they can engage with the sources and activity.

Closing (5 minutes)

Slide 10: Give each small group a chance to share their learning about one of the questions they investigated under the larger category of goods, ideas, and people. Ask each group to offer evidence from the sources that helped them answer their question.

Fill in information from the [Investigation Questions and Source Analysis \(Teacher Version\)](#) as you think appropriate. Students do not need to address every point but should ensure they have captured the major points on their organizer. As students report, listen for evidence that:

- They have read the texts or captions, not only scanned the images.
- They have made inferences. For instance, the presence of army watchtowers (Source B) would indicate that soldiers were guarding the Silk Routes.
- They have based their answer on more than one piece of evidence (when possible).

Lesson 6: Travel on the Silk Routes (Part 1)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Investigation Questions and Source Analysis (Teacher Version)

Letter & Type of Source	Observe Where is it from? When is it from? What was its purpose?	Read What does it tell us about goods, ideas, or people?	Connect Does this source help us answer any of our questions? How? What evidence from the source connects to a question?
GOODS			
C: Wooden tablet	Niya 2nd or 3rd century to communicate information	Books and paper spread (so did words from distant languages—use of Sanskrit in Niya).	
M: Doll	Chang'an 7th century child's toy	Paper was used for the Tang doll and for receipts.	
N: Diamond Sutra	China 868 CE Chinese translation of Buddhist text	Printed books—like the Diamond Sutra—traveled.	
F: Silk pictures	China 300s and 550 CE to show how silk was made	Silk and silk goods were traded.	
G: Glassware	Roman Empire first half of the 1st century CE bowls and cups for eating and drinking	Glass from the Roman Empire spread eastward; these bowls show that glassware was coveted even in China (found in elite tombs).	
I: Coins and silk	China 200s or 300s CE to be used as money	Source I shows that money/coins and silk bolts (used as money) traveled.	
K: Wall painting	Afrasiab mid-600s to show ambassadors taking gifts to a ruler	Gifts for rulers traveled along the Silk Road.	
L: Painting	China 10th century to show tribute animals being taken to rulers	Tribute gifts like the horses and camels in this painting moved with ambassadors or envoys.	

Letter & Type of Source	Observe Where is it from? When is it from? What was its purpose?	Read What does it tell us about goods, ideas, or people?	Connect Does this source help us answer any of our questions? How? What evidence from the source connects to a question?
GOODS			
O: Tax receipt	checkpoint on Silk Road 600 CE to record inspections of travelers and traders	These tax receipts show that silver coins, perfumes, medicine, silk thread, spices, and sugar were all traded at checkpoints. Note that all these goods in these quantities would have been light to carry.	
P: Metal cups	Sogdiana 7th century cups to be used for drinking or eating	Artistic metalware cups from Sogdiana show that luxury goods were carried on the Silk Road to China.	
Q: Porcelain dish	9th century Tang China plates for eating	Porcelain (fine china) like this white dish was traded from China to West Asia (and elsewhere), mostly by sea because it was heavy. It was also imitated in other cities.	
R: Shades	Turfan 7th to 9th century CE to block sunlight for travelers and traders	Maybe these ancient sunglasses were traded on the Silk Road (or maybe they were just too fun to leave out!)	
U: Jade carvings	China 1000 BCE precious stone for carvings and religious rituals	Jade and jade carvings were traded between China and other civilizations. They were used as decorations, traditional items, and religious ceremonies.	
V: Medical knowledge	China and India 8th and 9th centuries to cure illnesses	Medicinal plants and remedies traveled through trade from China and India to other parts of Asia.	
W: Gunpowder	China 9th century to ignite fireworks	The spread of gunpowder changed warfare in Europe, helping empires grow and become stronger.	

Letter & Type of Source	Observe Where is it from? When is it from? What was its purpose?	Read What does it tell us about goods, ideas, or people?	Connect Is this source relevant to any of our questions? Why or why not? What evidence from the source is relevant to a question?
IDEAS			
A: Text	China 139 BCE tell about an emperor who wanted to create a military alliance with the nomads in the north	Foreign policy: alliances, diplomacy, and tribute were served through the Silk Road—envoy's travels to Yuezhi show this.	
C: Book	Niya 2nd or 3rd century to communicate information	Papermaking technology spread from China (and later from West Asian cities that adopted the technology, like Samarkand).	
F: Silk making pictures	China 300s and 550 CE to show how silk was made	Painting of the silk-making process shows us that the Chinese were using the skill of silk making.	
G: Glassware	Roman Empire first half of the 1st century CE bowls and cups for eating and drinking	Glassmaking technology spread eastward, but local production was light relative to imports from Rome.	
I: Money and silk	China 200s or 300s CE to be used as money	Silk bolts show that silk spread as payment and a trade good.	
L: Painting	China 10th century to show tribute animals being taken to rulers	Horse riding (and fighting) skills spread with horses from nomadic peoples of the steppes. Note: Crossbow technology originated in Central Asia or China, but it's not clear from the evidence.	
P: Metal cups	Sogdiana 7th century cups to be used for drinking or eating	Metalwork skills moved from Central Asia (and West Asia) to China, sometimes with migrating artisans; we see this in Sogdian cups.	

Letter & Type of Source	Observe Where is it from? When is it from? What was its purpose?	Read What does it tell us about goods, ideas, or people?	Connect Is this source relevant to any of our questions? Why or why not? What evidence from the source is relevant to a question?
IDEAS			
D: Fabric	Khotan (oasis town) 3rd or 4th century CE woolen wall hanging designed with green and Asian designs	Designs/art motifs spread and were blended with local ideas: a Greek centaur with a Central Asian cape shows this. Greece is very distant from the Taklamakan Desert!	
M: Doll	Chang'an 7th century child's toy	Tang Barbie also shows various artistic influences: hairstyle, flower makeup, birds, and pearl circles.	
P: Porcelain plate	Sogdiana 7th century cups to be used for drinking or eating	China and other parts of Asia influenced one another in art motifs, as seen in this porcelain dish.	
Q: Metal cups	Tang China 9th century plates for eating	China and other parts of Asia influenced one another in art motifs, as seen in these lobed metalwares.	
T: Mosque	China 742 CE a place of worship for people of the Islamic religion	The Great Mosque of Chang'an/Xi'an shows Arabic writing and Central Asian use of turquoise on tiles, blended with Chinese-style temple architecture.	
H: Buddhist temples	East Asia 600s CE a place of worship for the people of the Buddhist religion	Religions spread: here we see Buddhism and its architectural form of the pagoda. The style was adapted to local tastes. Buddhist texts also spread (Xuanzang).	
N: Book	China 868 CE Chinese translation of Buddhist text	Printed books helped religions like Buddhism to spread. (Diamond Sutra shows this.)	

Letter & Type of Source	Observe	Read	Connect
	Where is it from? When is it from? What was its purpose?	What does it tell us about goods, ideas, or people?	Is this source relevant to any of our questions? Why or why not? What evidence from the source is relevant to a question?
IDEAS			
J: Carving	Persia 3rd and 7th centuries to symbolize the prophet Mani	Manichaeism was a religion from Persia; this carving of Mani is in southeast China. It spread a long way by sea routes to a temple there.	
T: Mosque	China 742 CE a place of worship for people of the Islamic religion	Islam spread from West Asia to China; we see this in the still-existing Chang'an (Xi'an) Great Mosque.	
V: Medical knowledge	China and India 8th and 9th centuries to cure illnesses	Medical knowledge and books spread along the Silk Road, sharing knowledge with different cultures. These ideas and practices are the foundation for modern medicine.	
W: Gunpowder	China 9th century to ignite fireworks	As the knowledge of making gunpowder spread, the technology for building weapons and other defenses increased. It changed how wars were fought during that time.	

Letter & Type of Source	Observe Where is it from? When is it from? What was its purpose?	Read What does it tell us about goods, ideas, or people?	Connect Is this source relevant to any of our questions? Why or why not? What evidence from the source is relevant to a question?
PEOPLE			
A: Records	China 139 BCE tell about an emperor who wanted to create a military alliance with the nomads in the north	Envoys (and their enslaved assistants) traveled to make alliances.	
K: Wall painting	Afrasiab mid-600s to show ambassadors taking gifts to a ruler	Ambassadors from as far as Korea travel to Samarkand in this mural, with gifts (tribute?).	
S: Royal Mission Letters	Khotan to Ganzhou Late 9th or early 10th century to describe the dangers on the roads	Royal princes and their guides appear in this source, traveling on a lengthy royal mission. Also possibly bandits or thieves who steal their animals and things!	
B: Camel and watchtower	China and Mongol dynasty 22–220 CE to show what life was like on the Silk Routes	Han army/soldiers staffed the road—the poem talks about their watchtowers. Men of Hu led the camels.	
I: Coins and silk	China 200s or 300s CE to be used as money	talks about paying the military	
E: Ancient Letters	Sogdiana or Dunhuang early 4th century to show what life was like for a Sogdian woman	This source shows us that not everyone was on the Silk Routes by choice—Miwnay was stranded there, unable to leave Dunhuang.	
H: Buddhist temples	East Asia 600s CE It is a place of worship for the people of the Buddhist religion.	Monks like Xuanzang brought Buddhist texts to China from India.	
O: Tax receipt	checkpoint on Silk Road 600 CE to record inspections of travelers and traders	Merchants (sellers) of many ethnicities were selling all kinds of things at the various checkpoints of the Silk Routes.	

Letter & Type of Source	Observe	Read	Connect
	Where is it from? When is it from? What was its purpose?	What does it tell us about goods, ideas, or people?	Is this source relevant to any of our questions? Why or why not? What evidence from the source is relevant to a question?
PEOPLE			
V: Medical knowledge	China and India 8th and 9th centuries to cure illnesses	Famous scholars wrote books about the plants and remedies they learned about through trade.	

LESSON 7

Travel on the Silk Routes (Part 2)

- EQ

How does trade affect ideas and culture?
- SQ

What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE
Explain the relevance of multiple sources for answering questions about the goods, ideas, and people involved in Silk Road interactions in the first millennium.	Explain the relevance of historical sources to historical questions by citing specific evidence orally and in writing.

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students continue to investigate Silk Routes sources and evaluate their relevance for answering different questions. They complete their Graphic Organizer with evidence relating to their questions about goods, ideas, and people who traveled the routes in the first millennium. Then they participate in a debriefing discussion, sharing findings on one of their sub-questions and writing an explanatory paragraph that answers one of them. Engaging with these sources is important preparation for the Silk Road simulation students will do in Cluster 2.

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T1b.2g, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, RCA-H.6-8.1, WCA.6-8.9
See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS
☐ Lesson 7 Slide Deck ☐ Lesson 5 Exit Ticket ☐ Lesson 1: Vocabulary Support for Lessons 1-8 ☐ Lesson 6: Investigation Questions and Sources (Teacher Version) ☐ Lesson 6: Investigation Questions and Sources ☐ Lesson 6: Travel on the Silk Route (Part 1) Student Slide Deck

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
Opening	5
Investigating Sources: Inquiry Questions and Source Analysis	30
Exit Ticket	15

Lesson 7: Travel on the Silk Routes (Part 2)

Unless otherwise noted, Investigating History is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- **Observe Language and Literacy Builder:** Assists and supports students in the first two steps of the Investigating Sources routine
- **Investigation Questions and Source Analysis (Sentence Starters):** Supports question generation and note-taking to discover evidence

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible, and/or allow students to use speech to text. Give students fewer slides to analyze and/or provide a guide showing some slides that would support each question to focus on. Consider simplifying the Exit Ticket instructions to "Answer one of your questions, and explain using evidence."
- Look Fors: Complete sentences will be brief but should include words from the source as well as students' own words and should include the use of relevant Tier 1 and 2 words using the starters provided.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- For the source analysis task, provide fewer slides to analyze. Encourage students to use words from the sources and the Graphic Organizer. Students may use the Sentence Starters handout for the Exit Ticket. Allow translation or speech to text if necessary.
- Look Fors: Simple to compound sentences should use relevant Tier 2 words.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students should be able to complete the source analysis task with minimal support although it may take them longer, so focusing on fewer sources may be necessary. They should be able to complete the Exit Ticket with minimal support.
- Look Fors: Paragraphs should include compound/complex sentence structure and a greater level of detail using evidence from the sources. Look for more precise Tier 3 academic vocabulary.



TEACHING TIP

While this pair of lessons has been designed to take two class periods, it may make sense to spread them out over three days, depending on students' familiarity with source work and reading levels, homework policies, length of class period, or the like.

Trimming down the slide deck is another way to customize the lessons to fit your available time. This can be done purposefully to enable students to answer questions in all three columns of their organizer.

Lesson 7: Travel on the Silk Routes (Part 2)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Opening (5 minutes)

Slide 2: Review questions students have already posed and begun trying to answer.

Slide 3: Remind students that to answer these questions, they will need to:

- Read the texts and captions, not only scan the images.
- Make inferences from what they read and see.
- Pay attention to clues of time and place.



Investigating Sources: Inquiry Questions and Source Analysis (30 minutes)

Have students rejoin their small groups and use 30 minutes of this class period to continue reading and thinking about what they can learn from the remaining sources in the **Travel on the Silk Route (Part 1) Student Slide Deck** used in the previous lesson. The [Investigation Questions and Source Analysis \(Teacher Version\)](#) may be helpful as you circulate to support the groups.

Slide 4: Even if students have not read every source, bring the whole class back together when 20 minutes remain in the class period.



Exit Ticket (15 minutes)

Using the [Lesson 5 Exit Ticket](#), ask students to write a paragraph answering one of their questions and explaining how they know what they know, citing the available evidence. Students should include the source they learned about this from and explain how it helped them form a conclusion.

Collect students' Graphic Organizers to formatively assess their understanding of the process of extracting information from sources.

Lesson 7: Travel on the Silk Routes (Part 2)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Consider providing students with options for demonstrating their understanding, for instance, recording their paragraph with audio or developing a graphic representation of their ideas.

Lesson 7: Travel on the Silk Routes (Part 2)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

LESSON 8

Putting It Together and Formative Assessment

EQ	How does trade affect ideas and culture?
SQ	What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE
Craft a written argument on the Supporting Question that includes evidence-supported claims. Share views with the class in open discussion.	Defend an argument about the most important Silk Route exchange by writing at least two paragraphs with relevant evidence from multiple sources, using persuasive language and superlative adjectives.

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this final lesson of the cluster, students put together their learning from Cluster 1 to answer the Cluster Supporting Question: *What were the most important goods and ideas that moved on the Silk Routes?* Students will build the Inquiry Chart for Cluster 1 learning by organizing and synthesizing their knowledge. To demonstrate their understanding, the Formative Assessment Task requires students to write a multi-paragraph argument using evidence from the sources investigated throughout the cluster.

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T1b.2g, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, SLCA.6-8.1, WCA.6-8.1, WCA.6-8.9
See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS
☐ Lesson 8 Slide Deck
☐ Putting It Together
☐ Cluster 1 Formative Assessment Task
☐ Cluster 1 Inquiry Chart
☐ Cluster 1 Inquiry Chart (Teacher Version)
☐ Handouts and Sources from Cluster 1
☐ Lesson 1: Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
Review Know and Wonder Chart	5
Putting it Together: Inquiry Chart	10
Return to Inquiry Chart	5
Formative Assessment	30

Lesson 8: Putting It Together and Formative Assessment

Unless otherwise noted, Investigating History is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- [Cluster 1 Formative Assessment Task \(Sentence Frames\)](#): Supports written responses to prompts
- [Claim-Evidence Language and Literacy Builder](#) Supports argument writing

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Encourage students to add to their organizers during discussions. Allow them to use notes from their Silk Road Concept Map. Students will benefit from a bilingual dictionary. For students who need additional support, provide a word bank, including the word *artifact*, and/or a list of choices for answers to each question, or a completed example of the Sentence Frames handout.
- [Look Fors](#): Written responses should use relevant Tier 1 and 2 words.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Encourage students to add to their organizers during discussions. Students should use the sentence frames from the Sentence Frames handout and the Claim LLB as guides, and information from their Silk Road Concept Map. Students will benefit from a bilingual dictionary.
- [Look Fors](#): Paragraphs should include complete simple and compound sentences using Tier 1 and 2 words.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students should be able to complete this task mostly independently although it may take them longer.
- [Look Fors](#): Paragraphs should use multiple compound and complex sentences, a greater level of detail, and more precise Tier 3 vocabulary.



ADVANCE PREPARATION

Have each class period's Unit 3 Cluster 1 Inquiry Chart and Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart easily accessible.

Review Know and Wonder Chart (5 minutes)

Slide 2: Remind students of the **Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart** they created as a class in Lesson 1. Explain that they

Lesson 8: Putting It Together and Formative Assessment

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

will use the Think-Pair-Share strategy to share their ideas with the class. Review a couple of responses under the “Know” section of the chart. Ask students: *What could we move from the “Wonder” to the “Know” part of the chart?*



Putting it Together: Inquiry Chart

(10 minutes)

Slide 3: Explain that during this class, students will return to the Cluster 1 Supporting Question and “put together” what they have learned about the most important goods and ideas that moved across the Silk Routes.

Slides 4–5: Present the **Unit 3 Cluster 1 Inquiry Chart** the class created in Lesson 2, and remind students of the Cluster 1 Supporting Question.

SUMMARIZE OUR LEARNING AND SHARE OUR INITIAL THINKING

Slide 6: Ask: *What resources did we use in Lessons 2–7?*

Have students discuss in a Think-Pair-Share format, then call on a few students to share their responses. Possible responses:

- Maps
- Artifacts
- Videos
- Timelines

Review the activities from the cluster’s lessons in the “What did we do?” column. After reading each lesson’s summary, ask for students to turn and talk about what they learned in that lesson.

SYNTHESIZE OUR IDEAS AND ANSWER THE SUPPORTING QUESTION

Ask: *What did we learn that helps us answer our Supporting Question?*

Give students time to discuss in a Think-Pair-Share format once more. Possible responses:

- People carried and traded various products because regions had different specialties. Small quantities of

Lesson 8: Putting It Together and Formative Assessment

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

light and valuable goods were traded overland. Later, the sea routes carried more goods in bulk.

- Through the Silk Routes, intangibles like skills and technologies moved in all directions with trade caravans, ships, and their products. These included papermaking and woodblock printing (which forever changed knowledge production and exchange), silkmaking, metalworking, and glassmaking. New technologies like the crossbow, magnetic compass, and gunpowder also spread.
- Cultural diffusion went hand in hand with trade, and ideas moved in all directions on the routes. These included artistic patterns and motifs, architectural styles, languages, and religions (Buddhism, Manichaeism, Islam, Church of the East, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Hinduism). The Silk Routes were characterized by great diversity.

When student groups share with the whole class, record their responses in the “What did we learn?” column of the Inquiry Chart. Prompt students to record this information on their own handouts.

Slide 7: Give each student a copy of [Putting It Together](#). Divide students into groups of three or four and have them generate a list of what they know has traveled or been traded along the Silk Routes (goods and ideas). Explain that to determine the answer to the Cluster 1 Supporting Question, we will examine the historical significance of the goods and ideas that moved along the Silk Routes.

Lesson 8: Putting It Together and Formative Assessment

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Slide 8: Ask students: *What criteria could help you, as a historian, decide what was important?*

Have them record ideas on their handouts, then take student responses.

Possible responses might include:

- How long did its impact last?
- How much did it affect people's lives?
- How widespread did it become?
- How did it become a model?
- How did it change the world?

Unpack the idea of historical importance, a key aspect students will need to answer the Cluster 1 Supporting Question. Explain that historical significance is evaluating the significance of selected past events, people, and developments.

Explain that some of the types of questions historians regularly ask and try to answer are: "What mattered?" "What was significant?" or "What was most important about some event?"

Slide 9: Tell students that today, we will be considering goods and ideas that were widespread, had a significant impact on people's lives, and still have an effect after the end of the Silk Road.

Ask students to discuss in small groups and sort their goods and ideas into the following categories:

- Goods or Ideas that traveled far or became widespread
- Goods or ideas that affected people's lives in major ways
- Goods or ideas whose impact lasted beyond the Silk Routes

Slide 10: After groups have had time to organize their lists, have students use the concept map and choose two of their listed goods or ideas they believe are the most important and explain:

- Why do these goods or ideas stand out?
- What makes them important, in your view?



TEACHING TIP

To prepare for this activity, teachers may wish to review the article "[The Legacy of the Silk Road](#)" from YaleGlobal Online, which offers a historian's perspective of the relative weighting of things, ideas, technologies, and even mindsets that arose from Silk Road contact. "[Silk Road](#)" from *Serious Science* is another helpful resource. Prompt students to consider including some intangibles on their list of considerations if they haven't already. For an overview of the Silk Road's various eras, see "[The Silk Road: Connecting People and Cultures](#)" from Smithsonian.

Lesson 8: Putting It Together and Formative Assessment

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

- What evidence or source supports your thinking?
- How did that source help you understand the importance of the goods or ideas?

Slide 11: Lead a whole-class discussion to help students gain additional clarity or information on the impact of different exchanges or to have them share more background evidence from their prior research.

You should help students explore the impact in greater depth. For instance, you could give the example of how a religion like Buddhism spread through the Silk Routes (thanks to characters like those in our simulation) and became practiced throughout East Asia and beyond.

If class consensus emerges around a certain idea or trade good, note this, but also legitimize different possible arguments so that students feel they can “go against the grain” with a different viewpoint as long as they can support it. Reiterate the importance of helpful evidence to support any claim.

Return to Inquiry Chart *(5 minutes)*

RETURN TO THE INQUIRY CHART

Slide 12: Revisit the questions students added under the Supporting Question in Lesson 2 as part of their Launching the Question routine, as well as questions from the Wonder column of the **Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart** from Lesson 1.

Ask: Have any of these questions been answered? Have any new questions come up?

Give students a few minutes to share their thoughts and ideas with the group. Add those questions to the chart.

STAMP THE KEY LEARNING



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Provide ML students with [Cluster 1 Formative Assessment Task \(Sentence Frames\)](#) to support their construction of responses in this activity.

Lesson 8: Putting It Together and Formative Assessment

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Slide 13: Explain to students that they will use the sources from Cluster 1 and their knowledge of the Silk Routes to provide their opinion about the Cluster Supporting Question.



Formative Assessment (30 minutes)

Argument Writing—Answering the Question

Distribute the [Cluster 1 Formative Assessment Task](#) to students. Explain to students that they should write two paragraphs arguing which goods or ideas were the most important to move along the Silk Routes. They should:

- Write one paragraph clearly stating their argument about the most important goods and ideas that moved along the Silk Road.
- Use evidence and explanations of their viewpoint.
- Include specific artifacts and explain why they were helpful to their argument.
- Write a concluding paragraph summarizing their argument and reinforcing why the goods and ideas highlighted were the most important.
- Reflect on the historical significance and overall impact of the chosen goods or ideas exchanged along the Silk Road.

Once students have completed it, collect the Formative Assessment Tasks from them.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

To support argument writing, remind students to access their [Claim-Evidence Language and Literacy Builder](#).

Lesson 8: Putting It Together and Formative Assessment

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

In-Depth Inquiry: Exchange at the Oasis

What would a traveler or trader on the Silk Routes experience?

CONTENTS
Lesson 9 Silk Road Inquiry Cycle (Part 1)
Lesson 10 Silk Road Inquiry Cycle (Part 2)
Lesson 11 Simulation

Overview

Cluster 2 comprises the simulation activity and debrief. Through question development, research in sources, character development, and presentation in the simulation, students demonstrate their command of PS 2 and PS 5 as well as W1 and W9. Students will review multiple sources and synthesize information to embody a character during the simulation. Finally, students will interview each other to learn more about the experiences of traders and travelers along the Silk Routes.

- ### Learning Objectives
- By the end of this cluster, students should be able to...**
- Argue in writing which was the most important good or idea to move on the Silk Routes.
 - Describe the diversity of religions, languages, ethnicities, and cultures that flourished in trading cities.
 - Construct social studies explanations that establish perspective for communicating outcomes, consequences, or documentation (WIDA ELD-SS.6-8.Explain.Expressive).

Vocabulary

Cluster Focus Standards

Practice Standards

STANDARD	LESSON(S)
PS 2: Develop and evaluate relevant guiding questions with peer support.	9-11
PS 5: Critique the usefulness of a historical source for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.	9-11

Content Standards

STANDARD	LESSON(S)
7.T1b.2g: the role topography and geography played in making trade along the several routes of the Silk Road viable and lucrative; connections through trade routes to Africa, Europe, and China	9-11
7.T2b.2f: China's role in trade across Asia and to and from Africa and Europe along the Silk Roads and the introduction of Buddhism in China starting c. 1st century CE.	9-11
7.T2c.1: Trace the spread of Buddhism from India in the 4th century BCE to China, Korea, and Japan, and its development in Japan from the 6th through the 13th century CE; explain significant cultural contributions of ancient Japan (e.g., Buddhist philosophy, art, calligraphy, and temple and landscape architecture).	9-11

Literacy Standards

STANDARD	LESSON(S)
RCA-H.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, quoting or paraphrasing as appropriate.	9-11
SLCA.6-8.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on discipline-specific topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	11

Unit 3, Cluster 2 Inquiry Chart (Teacher Version)

Unit EQ	How does trade affect ideas and culture?
Cluster SQ	What would a traveler or trader on the Silk Routes experience?
What questions will we ask?	

What did we do?	What did we learn that helps us answer our question(s)?
Lesson 9: Read about and researched an assigned historically based character	What a historically based figure would have experienced while traveling and trading along the Silk Road.
Lesson 10: Read about and researched an assigned historically based character.	Explored the significance, motivations, and roles of a historically based figure on the Silk Road.
Lesson 11: Participated in a Simulation of the Silk Road using a historically based character. Interviewed characters to learn about their experiences	Travelers faced harsh weather conditions, including extreme heat in the deserts and freezing temperatures in the mountains. They also encountered bandits, language barriers, and illnesses. Finding food and water was another challenge, especially in remote areas. Oasis towns were vital rest stops where traders could buy and sell goods, rest, and resupply before continuing their journey. They also became centers for cultural exchange, where people from different regions shared languages, religions, and ideas. Travelers often had to learn basic words in different languages to trade effectively. Buddhism, Islam, and other religions spread along the route, influencing local cultures. New inventions and ideas, such as papermaking from China and mathematical concepts from the Middle East also traveled along the Silk Routes.

LESSON 9

Silk Road Inquiry Cycle (Part 1)

EQ How does trade affect ideas and culture?

SQ What would a traveler or trader on the Silk Routes experience?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Read multiple sources and synthesize information to develop a plausible identity for a character involved in Silk Road exchange and an argument for the importance of that character's contribution.

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE

Seek information about a historically based character's role on the Silk Road by identifying their contributions within readings and recording them using action verbs and discipline-specific language.

LESSON OVERVIEW

Having delved into primary sources, the next three lessons include an In-Depth Inquiry in which students form a viewpoint on the question: *What would a traveler or trader on the Silk Routes experience?* Students receive character profiles and learn the roles of particular figures involved in Silk Route trade and travel, engaging in further reading and research to understand the details of their character's circumstances. Students ultimately participate in a simulation and write arguments responding to the question. In this pair of lessons, students develop questions and begin to read about and research their character, taking notes on a Graphic Organizer.

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T1b.2g, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, RCA-H.6-8.1
See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS

- ☐ [Lesson 9 Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [The Travels of Ch'ang Ch'un to the West Student Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [Silk Road Character Profiles](#)
- ☐ [Character Development Sheet](#)
- ☐ [Character Summary Guide for Exchange at the Oases \(Teacher Version\)](#)
- ☐ [Cluster 2 Inquiry Chart](#)
- ☐ [Cluster 2 Inquiry Chart \(Teacher Version\)](#)
- ☐ Lesson 1: Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart

Lesson 9: Silk Road Inquiry Cycle (Part 1)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
Launching the Question	15
Reading and Research to Represent a Historically Based Figure	30
Return to Inquiry Chart	5

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- [Character Development Sheet \(Sentence Frames\)](#): Supports note-taking and written responses

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Encourage students to use the Question LLB to create questions for the Inquiry Chart. Students will likely need support to complete the Sentence Frames handout, including the use of translation, and should be assigned one of the shorter readings, with key information highlighted or bolded.
- Look Fors: Complete sentences using the frames provided should use relevant Tier 1 and 2 words.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- Encourage students to use the Question LLB to create questions for the Inquiry Chart. Students will likely need support to complete the Sentence Frames handout, including translation of web links for note-taking, and should be assigned a shorter reading, with key information highlighted or bolded.
- Look Fors: Students should include all information required using complete sentences and relevant Tier 2 words.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students should be able to complete the activity independently although they may need longer to read through the information and complete the Sentence Frames handout.
- Look Fors: Compound/complex sentences should include more precise Tier 3 words and a greater level of detail.

Lesson 9: Silk Road Inquiry Cycle (Part 1)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

**ADVANCE PREPARATION**

Determine if you want to work with the Inquiry Chart on chart paper or digitally. You will need separate class copies for each class period. Students will also need to have their own copies to work with throughout the Cluster, either digitally or printed.

Have each class period's Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart from Lesson 1 easily accessible.

Familiarize yourself with the characters using the [Character Summary Guide for Exchange at the Oases \(Teacher Version\)](#) or the full profiles, and print out the [Silk Road Character Profiles](#).

**TEACHING TIP**

Vocabulary in these lessons is character-dependent. Check in with students as they read and research their characters to see whether they have questions about particular words. Encourage them to use an online dictionary such as [The Britannica Dictionary](#) or a multilingual reference such as [wordreference.com](#) to look up unknown words for themselves.

**Launching the Question** (15 minutes)**SPARK CURIOSITY**

Slide 2: Split students into pairs and give each pair one traveler's diary quote, from The [The Travels of Ch'ang Ch'un to the West Student Slide Deck](#). Prompt students to discuss with an elbow partner:

- What do you notice about this quote?
- What might this traveler have experienced? Think about the five senses (see, hear, taste, smell, touch).

Understanding the experiences of a traveler on the Silk Road will help us answer our Cluster 2 Supporting Question.

Lesson 9: Silk Road Inquiry Cycle (Part 1)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

INTRODUCE THE SUPPORTING QUESTION AND ELICIT INITIAL THINKING

Slide 3: Introduce the Cluster 2 Supporting Question:



What would a traveler or trader on the Silk Routes experience?

Explain to students that throughout this cluster, they will explore the experiences of many characters along the Silk Road to better understand their experiences.

Slide 4: Introduce the [Cluster 2 Inquiry Chart](#). Remind students that the Inquiry Chart will help them keep track of their ongoing learning and questions throughout the unit.

- Explain that historians ask many questions to understand and make sense of history and its connection to the present day.
- Asking good questions starts with considering what one already knows, which then helps one identify what one still needs to explore and learn.

DEVELOP THE INQUIRY CHART

Slide 5: Ask students: *What do you already know about this Supporting Question?*

Prompt students to recall and share what they know about this topic from their initial work with the **Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart** in Lesson 1 and previous learnings, their lives, and/or other classes and resources.

Possible responses:

- Travelers would see or experience the different religions and cultures.
- Traders would learn new languages to help in making trades.
- The weather could be harsh (cold, dry) at times.
- Travelers would meet different types of people along the way.

Slide 6: Ask students: *Which of the questions we brainstormed in our Wonder column of the Know and*



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Encourage MLs to use their [Question Language and Literacy Builder](#) to ask questions and write statements about what they wonder.

Lesson 9: Silk Road Inquiry Cycle (Part 1)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Wonder chart might relate to this Supporting Question?

Prompt students to share their ideas in a Think-Pair-Share format. Student responses will vary based on their Wonder questions.

Slide 7: Ask: *What other related questions can help us answer this Supporting Question?*

Prompt students to share their ideas in a Think-Pair-Share format.

Invite students to share their questions with the whole class.

- Consolidate or synthesize questions related to the Supporting Question as needed so there are three to four representative questions.
- Add these three to four questions to the “What questions will we ask?” section of the class’s Inquiry Chart.
- Prompt students to record the questions on their own Inquiry Chart handouts.

Reading and Research to Represent a Historically Based Figure (30 minutes)



TEACHING TIP

Many of the figures in our simulation are historical people, although we have adapted some details of their lives. Most of these short character profiles are based on longer portraits from Susan Whitfield’s *Life Along the Silk Road* (University of California Press), a source to which these profiles are much indebted.

PREVIEW THE LEARNING AHEAD

Distribute the [Character Development Sheet](#).

Slide 8: Explain to students that Cluster 2 includes an In-Depth Inquiry involving a simulation of the Silk Route trade. Through guided individual study and research, they will each learn the role of one particular figure in the Silk Road exchange—a character whose identity is informed by historians’ knowledge of people who lived and traveled on these routes.

Lesson 9: Silk Road Inquiry Cycle (Part 1)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Slide 9: Explain that in our simulation, some characters will travel on the routes, overland or by sea; others will be based at four major oasis towns: Chang'an, Dunhuang, Turfan, and Samarkand.

- Ask students to find and mark the locations of the four oases we will use as the basis for stations in our simulation activity: Chang'an, Dunhuang, Turfan, and Samarkand.
- Explain that some of the traders (merchants) will be based in these important towns, and those traders will become experts about the towns themselves: what they were like, what they produced for trade, and their unique cultures.
- Ask students to also trace the major sea routes and note some places where sailors or shipmasters came into port. In our simulation, they will travel beyond these ports to the oases inland.

Explain that three of the characters will have the opportunity to perform at particular moments in the simulation: the storyteller will tell an actual Silk Road story, the musician will play along with a recording (to be selected from links provided) or select one to play on a similar instrument, and the dancer will either model dance postures from a Silk Road dance based on artistic depictions of dancing or interpret images of these postures to create a more fluid dance.

- If there are eager musicians, dancers, or storytellers/dramatists in your class, they would be good candidates for these roles.
- Assign each student a "Silk Route Identity," drawing upon your knowledge of their interests and (where relevant) skills. These are linked on Slide 8.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Remind ML students to use their [Character Development Sheet](#) ([Sentence Frames](#)) with built-in models of language and sentence frames for scaffolding MLs at all proficiency levels.

Character Profiles		
Horseman	Princess	Pilgrim
Traveling Merchant (Sogdiana) Traveling Merchant (Baghdad)	Envoy (Sogdiana) Envoy (Chola)	Buddhist Monk Buddhist Nun
Sailor	Silk Producer	Paper Maker

Lesson 9: Silk Road Inquiry Cycle (Part 1)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Shipmaster*	Soldier	Storyteller (Dunhuang)
Dancer (Chang'an)*	Musician (Turfan)	Merchant (Chang'an)*
Merchant (Dunhuang)*	Merchant (Turfan)*	Merchant (Samarkand)*

Distribute the [Silk Road Character Profiles](#) for each identity above (doubling up as necessary for your number of students). Point out the Additional Resources digital links that go with each.

Slide 10: Explain that for the remainder of class and the next entire class period, students will read their character profiles and use the additional research links provided on these sheets to develop a deeper understanding of their character's role on the Silk Routes. They will need access to digital devices to access these resources. As they read, they can personalize their character using historical facts they learn from the readings.

Reference the [Character Summary Guide for Exchange at the Oases \(Teacher Version\)](#) to assist students as you circulate. Customize this guide with whatever information emerges as needed and useful.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

For MLs, consider pairing two students in advance for the simulation preparation. Support these students in practicing using the language and having conversations for the simulation.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Readings vary in length and accessibility, so assign characters with students' reading levels in mind. You may also shorten readings as necessary—be sure to preserve the character's key contributions and the goods or ideas they brought with them.



BUILD LITERACY

The Additional Resources are often not written at a seventh-grade level, so part of the skill students are practicing is skimming sources and picking out useful information without understanding every word of a source. Model this practice for students with a link or two.

Lesson 9: Silk Road Inquiry Cycle (Part 1)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Return to Inquiry Chart (5 minutes)

Slide 11: Revisit the questions students added under the Supporting Question as part of their Launching the Question routine and questions from the Wonder column of the Know and Wonder Chart from Lesson 1.

- Ask: *Have any new questions come up?*

Give students a few minutes to share their thoughts and ideas with the group. Add those questions to the chart.

Lesson 9: Silk Road Inquiry Cycle (Part 1)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Character Summary Guide for Exchange at the Oases (Teacher Version)

Uyghur Horseman: Kutlug (“Kut-loo”)—Kutlug is a Uyghur Turk horseman who lives with his family in the southern part of the [Uygher Khaganate](#), in a region known as Dzungaria. He knows a lot about the [Tarpan ponies](#) that his tribe raises. Kutlug is a skilled fighter. The Uyghur Turk horsemen are strong, tough, and intimidating. The Uyghur Turks supply the Tang Chinese with horses, which they need for military purposes. Every year, the Uyghurs send a caravan of thousands of ponies to the Chinese capital of Chang’an.

Tang Princess: Tai (rhymes with “sigh”)—The sister of the Tang Chinese emperor, Princess Tai traveled from Chang’an to the [Uyghur capital](#) in order to marry their emperor. Her arranged marriage was meant to cement the friendship between the Chinese and the Uyghurs. The marriage between the ruling families helped to smooth negotiations between the two powers. Tai was the fourth Tang princess to be sent to marry a Uyghur khagan. She was both a part of Silk Route diplomacy and a beneficiary of the luxury goods of the trade.

Buddhist Pilgrim: Chudda (“Choo-da”)—Chudda is a Buddhist monk from [Kashmir](#). He entered the Buddhist monastery as a child and became a fully ordained monk in his twenties. He supported himself by selling scrolls, prayer sheets, and small paintings at a stall near the monastery. Chudda decided that he would make a long pilgrimage to Mount Wutai in China, a site important to Buddhists as the home of a bodhisattva. He later settled at a monastery in Dunhuang.

Traveling Merchant: Nanaivandak (“Naa-nigh-vaan-daak”)—Nanaivandak is a merchant from [Sogdiana](#), who was raised by his uncle in Samarkand. Nanaivandak’s father died in a rebellion against the Abbasid Empire. After that, his uncle adopted him and taught him how to run the business. Nanaivandak’s parents were Zoroastrian, but his uncle had converted him to the popular Manichaean religion. Nanaivandak’s work as a merchant took him along the Eastern Silk Road, trading luxury goods and practical items like chemicals.

Traveling Merchant: Zidan (“Zee-dan”)—Zidan is a traveling merchant from [Baghdad](#), where he resides near the great center of scholarship and translation, the House of Wisdom. His work takes him along the land routes of the Silk Road as he works to buy and sell spices from a variety of locations and for a variety of purposes. The spices he trades come from the Byzantine Empire at the western end of the silk routes. Zidan never married and has no children. Although most merchants tend to make shorter trips between two destinations, Zidan has always been fascinated by the different customs and cultures of the world. So he travels east to Samarkand, Turfan, and even Dunhuang whenever he gets the chance.

Sogdian Envoy (Diplomat): Yong Hu (“Yōng Hoo”)—Yong Hu is an envoy, or diplomat, from [Sogdiana](#). He began working as an envoy when he was only 13. At the beginning of his career, he practiced by negotiating for local nomadic groups. As he matured and became a skilled negotiator, he became a representative of the Sogdian government to China. Yong Hu’s work brought him wealth and respect. When he died he was buried in a luxurious tomb decorated with Zoroastrian symbols, as well as paintings of himself hunting with nomads and enjoying banquets with his wife.

Chola Empire Envoy: Barsaat—Barsaat is the son of Ahar, who is a captain in the Chola Empire's navy. Barsaat was not cut out for military service like his father, but he still works on behalf of the Chola emperor as an envoy, traveling the maritime Silk Route around Southeast Asia. Barsaat protects the relationship between his emperor and the Chinese emperor, ensuring trade flows freely.

Buddhist Monk: Xuanzang ("Shu-an Dzang")—Xuanzang is a Buddhist monk who lives at the Temple of Great Learning in Chang'an. Xuanzang became frustrated because he felt that many of the Buddhist texts he worked with were incomplete or misinterpreted by earlier translators. To solve this problem, he undertook a perilous overland journey to India to seek learning and obtain original Buddhist texts to translate himself.

Buddhist Nun: Miaofu ("Me-ow Foo")—Miaofu has been a nun since she was 11 years old. She took part in a ceremony where her long hair was cut off and her head shaved so that she would be reminded to live her life modestly. Miaofu's mother, who was Tibetan, supported Miaofu's choice to become a nun, as did her father. They were both devout Buddhists. They wished that Miaofu would lead a life filled with peace and enlightenment. Miaofu took her vows as a Buddhist nun seriously and enjoyed her life at the monastery. She made it her goal to become an abbess, or the head of a nunnery, so she could be the one to enforce the rules. She was able to achieve that goal and became the abbess of the largest nunnery in Dunhuang when she was only 40 years old.

Sailor: Sulaiman ("Soo-lay-mahn")—Sulaiman is a merchant and sailor from [Persia](#). Most merchants who trade along the Indian Ocean routes tend to stop at one trading hub along the maritime routes. But Sulaiman prides himself on being able to navigate the entire route from the [port of Siraf](#) on the southern coast of Persia all the way to Guangzhou, China, a journey of about 6 months! In fact, there are whispers that he was the first person from Western Asia to make the whole trip. Although Sulaiman loves his life on the water, he is well aware of its dangers. Pirates lurk along the routes, hoping to plunder. And the monsoon winds and typhoons of the rainy season can be treacherous and cause shipwrecks.

Silk Producer: Mengli ("Mung-lee")—Mengli is a sericulturist (silk producer) who lives in China under the rule of the Tang Dynasty. Her family has been producing silk for centuries. Mengli is currently in a weaving cycle. She has a large order to fill for the Chinese government, which needs thousands of bolts of rough silk to pay its soldiers who are posted along the trading routes. As she finishes her bolt, her mother comes into the workshop with exciting news. Her family has been chosen to weave the silk robes to be gifted to the royal family of the [Uyghur Khaganate](#).

Papermaker: Tou Houan ("Toe Hoe-aan")—Tou Houan was a leading Chinese artisan in northwest China during the Tang Dynasty. The demand for paper was so high that Tou struggled to keep up with orders. On the Silk Road, paper was so valuable that scrap paper was used for wrapping products. Recycled paper was used to make funerary garments: shoes, hats, and clothing to wrap the dead, and statues to accompany them to the afterlife. Tou felt good about his craft. The use of books was spreading and so was knowledge—of religious teaching, of languages, of math and science. Business was booming.

Shipmaster: Tazen (“Tah-zen”)—Tazen is a Christian shipmaster from the Kingdom of [Aksum](#) in eastern Africa. He owns a fleet of ships that travel from [Adulis](#) to ports in Persia and India. His voyages are coordinated with the monsoon winds. The primary items that he exports are glass, ivory, frankincense, and emeralds. On his expeditions he comes into contact with products, people, and ideas from many different places. He speaks some Persian and Indian languages, but he does not speak Chinese. The purpose of Tazen’s travels is to exchange goods and make profits, and he risks shipwrecks and pirate attacks to do so.

Tibetan Soldier: Seg Lhaton (“Seg Lah-tone”)—Seg Lhaton is a Tibetan soldier stationed at a fort in [Miran](#) at the southern edge of the Taklamakan Desert. He has been a soldier since he was 15 years old and has fought in battles as far away as the Pamir Mountains. He would rather be farming his own land at home, but the Tibetan emperor requires all men to serve in the army and help to control the silk routes. As Seg waits for permission to return home, he is haunted by memories of bloody battles and the many soldiers who fought around him. As a foot soldier, he now stores his basic equipment in the fort. He hopes never to use it again as his taste for battle is a thing of the past.

Storyteller: Nyein (“Nee-īne”)—Nyein is a storyteller who travels the Silk Road entertaining the merchants and pilgrims who stop at the oases. Her tales teach lessons about the consequences of good or foolish behavior. In return for stories, Nyein might be rewarded with small trinkets, a hot meal, or some wine to drink. Although originally from India, Nyein now spends time primarily in two locations: Chang’an and Dunhuang.

Dancer: Upach (“Oo-paach”)—Upach is a Sogdian dancer who lives in Chang’an. She learned the dances as a young girl and now makes her living dancing for the merchants who visit the famous Western Market and the restaurants that surround it. Upach is especially talented at a dance called the Sogdian Whirl—she spins, leaps, and does somersaults on a small felt rug, wearing colorful, flowing garments of crimson and green. Many say Upach is the fastest and most graceful whirler in Chang’an.

Musician: Larishka (“Lah-rish-kah”)—Larishka is a musician who was born in [Kucha](#) (Kuqa), a city in the Tarim Basin. She comes from a family of entertainers. Like her grandmother and mother before her, she has taken classes in music, singing, and dancing ever since she was a young girl. She specializes in playing the Kuchan lute, which is a four-stringed instrument with a bent neck. Music, song, and dance are traded along the Silk Road, just like spices and silk. Larishka earns her living performing with her troupe at banquets, festivals, and public market places.

Chang’an Merchant: Li Shaojin (“Lee Shao-jeen”)—Li Shaojin grew up in the city of [Chang’an](#), listening to traders from across the world selling their goods and bargaining for the best prices. As an adult, he works at the West Market, where goods from across the world are exchanged. There, Li meets with foreign traders looking to sell their products. He then stores them in warehouses that line the market’s walls. In time, he sells the wares to the more than three thousand shops, which offer goods ranging from cakes to goldfish to silverware to spices.

Dunhuang Merchant: Hong Bian (“Hōhng Bee-yan”)—Hong Bian lives in the Silk Road crossroads of [Dunhuang](#). This is a city known for its caves, monasteries, and scribes who translate and copy sacred texts. But it also features a lively Night Market, where traders from cities near and far cross paths and sell their goods. This is where Hong Bian feels most at home, and where he spends the evening hours.

Turfan Merchant: Aygul (“AAY-gol”)—Aygul lives in the northern Silk Route city of [Turfan](#), an oasis fed by water channels that support agriculture in the hot land of the Tarim Basin. While her family grows fruits and vegetables in the baking sun, she sells them at the market. She tempts thirsty caravan traders to her shop with free slices of melon. While many of the merchants in neighboring shops are men, Aygul is quick with numbers and enjoys trading her family’s produce and other goods. So she has long worked as a trader. She enjoys the bustle of the market and the traveling performers.

Samarkand Merchant: Wiyusi (“We-yoo-see”)—Wiyusi lives in the Sogdian oasis city of [Samarkand](#), a Central Asian city long famous for its merchants. Buying and selling goods at the market is something Wiyusi has done since she was young. Back then, she tagged along with her father. He was a long-distance trader who brought home exotic goods from across the high Pamir and Hindu Kush mountains. Growing up around traders, she learned words from many languages and came to recognize quality products. While she rarely trades in other cities, she likes to have the world come to her.

LESSON 10

Silk Road Inquiry Cycle (Part 2)

EQ How does trade affect ideas and culture?

SQ What would a traveler or trader on the Silk Routes experience?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Read multiple sources and synthesize information to develop a plausible identity for a character involved in Silk Road exchange and an argument for the importance of that character's contribution.

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE

Seek information about a historically based character's role on the Silk Road by identifying their contributions within readings and recording them using action verbs and discipline-specific language.

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson continues to prepare students for a character simulation in which they will embody historical figures traveling the Silk Routes. Students research their assigned characters, taking notes on a Graphic Organizer to understand their roles, motivations, and significance in trade and cultural exchange. Using the Character Interview Preparation handout, they craft responses that highlight their character's experiences, goals, and impact on history. They also practice conversations with partners to prepare for one-on-one dialogues in the next class, where they will meet other travelers at oasis towns. The lesson concludes with a Turn and Talk activity, where students discuss what a trader or traveler on the Silk Routes might experience, reinforcing their understanding of trade's historical and cultural effects.

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T1b.2g, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, RCA-H.6-8.1

See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS

- ☐ [Lesson 10 Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [Character Interview Preparation](#)
- ☐ Lesson 9: Character Development Sheet
- ☐ Lesson 9: Character Summary Guide for Exchange at the Oases (Teacher Version)

Lesson 10: Silk Road Inquiry Cycle (Part 2)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
Introduction	5
Continue Character Research	40
Turn and Talk	5

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- **Character Development Sheet (Sentence Frames):** Supports inquiry language for question generation and response creation
- [*Character Interview Preparation \(Sentence Frames\)*](#): Supports note-taking and written responses

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer, if possible, to prepare a character. Students should be provided with a shorter version of the reading, with key information highlighted or bolded, and encouraged to use the Character Development Sheet to complete the Character Interview Preparation handout. They should translate web links as necessary to gather information about their character.
- Look Fors: Complete sentences using the frames provided should use relevant Tier 1 and 2 words.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- Students should be provided with a shorter version of the reading, with key information highlighted or bolded, and encouraged to use the Character Development Sheet to complete the Character Interview Preparation handout. They may translate web links to gather information about their character.
- Look Fors: Complete sentences using the frames provided should use relevant Tier 1 and 2 words.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students should be able to complete the activity independently although they may need longer to read the information and complete their Character Development Sheet and Character Interview Preparation handouts.
- Look Fors: Compound/complex sentences should use more precise Tier 3 academic vocabulary and include a greater level of detail when explaining their character.

Lesson 10: Silk Road Inquiry Cycle (Part 2)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

**TEACHING TIP**

Vocabulary in these lessons is character-dependent. Check in with students as they read and research their characters to see whether they have questions about particular words. Encourage them to use an online dictionary such as [The Britannica Dictionary](https://www.britannica.com) or a multilingual reference such as [wordreference.com](https://www.wordreference.com) to look up unknown words for themselves.

Introduction (5 minutes)

Explain to students that they will continue their research for the character simulation during today's class period. They will be meeting and learning about six other characters in one-on-one dialogues. Between the stages of their journey (between migrations to new oases), they will enjoy performances by the dancer, musician, and storyteller.

Remind students that after learning more about their character from their profile and the additional sources, they will represent their figure in an activity where they travel between four different oasis towns and converse with others they meet. They will:

- Explain their character's reason for traveling, goals, and concerns
- Prepare to dialogue in ways that share the value and importance of their role: why they traveled or traded, why it mattered, and how it changed society or history.

In other words, they will make a case for their figure's importance or *significance*.



Continue Character Research (40 minutes)

**SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS**

Remind students to use their [Character Interview Preparation \(Sentence Frames\)](#) handout with built-in models of language and sentence frames for scaffolding MLs at all proficiency levels. They can also revisit the **Character Development Sheet (Sentence Frames)** from Lesson 9.

Distribute the [Character Interview Preparation](#) handout, and review the directions with students. They can also revisit the

Lesson 10: Silk Road Inquiry Cycle (Part 2)

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Character Development Sheet. Remind them to practice their conversation with a partner in preparation for the simulation. Have students continue their research. Circulate to check progress, and support small groups as needed.

Turn and Talk (5 minutes)

Have students individually reflect on how their character might answer the Supporting Question: *What would a traveler or trader on the Silk Routes experience?* Using a Turn and Talk, have students discuss their character's response to the question.

Their responses should use aspects of what they know about the character. After students have had a chance to discuss, select a few to share their responses with the class.

Remind students to come prepared, to speak as their character in the next class, and to listen to others' views as they interact through trade and engage in dialogues about their lives and goals on the Silk Road.

Revisit the expectations for students to represent their character, drawing on the detailed information and specific vocabulary gained through their research. They may bring appropriate props if they wish, but this is not required.

LESSON 11

Simulation

EQ How does trade affect ideas and culture?

SQ What would a traveler or trader on the Silk Routes experience?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Orally represent a historically based character's role, and listen to gather new information about what a traveler on the Silk Routes might experience.

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE

Explain a character's role in Silk Road exchange by describing their contributions and significance in dialogue with classmates using discipline-specific and descriptive language.

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson is the Silk Road exchange simulation. Its purpose is for students to engage in inquiry (investigate sources) in the form of dialogue with their peers/fellow Silk Route figures while migrating to different oases. Oasis “stations” with tactile objects allow students to encounter goods as well as the ideas and technologies that circulated alongside them, gathering information about their value and importance. As they listen, generate new questions, and seek new evidence to answer the Supporting Question, they also practice their own speaking skills as they share dimensions of their character developed through their research. They also take notes on what they are learning. These conversations will cultivate deeper learning who, what, and why about the people who journeyed on these routes in the first millennium.

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T1b.2g, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, RCA-H.6-8.1, SLCA.6-8.1
See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS

- ☐ [Lesson 11 Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [Silk Route Simulation Order \(Teacher Version\)](#)
- ☐ [Simulation Interview Sheet](#)
- ☐ [Cluster 2 Inquiry Chart](#)
- ☐ [Cluster 2 Inquiry Chart \(Teacher Version\)](#)
- ☐ Lesson 9: Character Development Sheet
- ☐ Lesson 9: Silk Road Character Profiles
- ☐ Lesson 10: Character Interview Preparation
- ☐ Sticky name tags and markers
- ☐ Lesson 1: Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart

Lesson 11: Simulation

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
Silk Routes Simulation	35
Putting it Together: Simulation Debrief	15

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- **Character Interview Preparation (Sentence Frames):** Supports note-taking and written responses
- [Summarize Language and Literacy Builder](#): Helps to identify a main idea and supporting details

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer, if possible, to present their character and complete their interview sheet. They may need practice reading their sentences and may need to show others their paper to share information, but they should try to read aloud if possible.
- Look Fors: Written responses should include complete information about one other character from each oasis. Students should attempt to read their information aloud even if it contains errors.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer, if possible, to present their character and complete their interview sheet. They may need to show others their paper to provide information to support their reading aloud.
- Look Fors: Written responses should include complete information about one other character from each oasis using Tier 2 words. Students should read their information aloud even if it contains errors.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students should be able to complete the interview activity independently. They should be able to verbally communicate information about their character even if they need to read it from their character sheet.
- Look Fors: Compound/complex sentences, more precise Tier 3 academic vocabulary, and a greater level of detail should be used when explaining facets of their character and writing about others.

Lesson 11: Simulation

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

**ADVANCE PREPARATION**

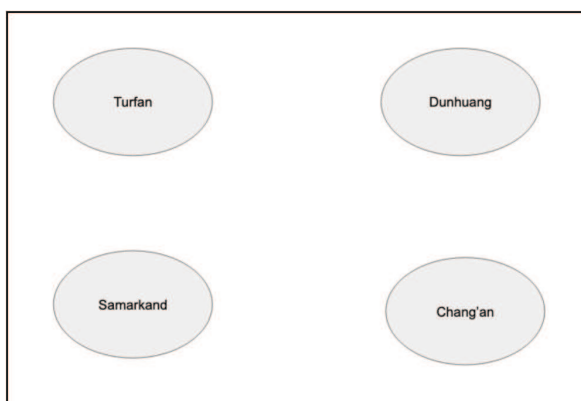
In a larger gym, cafeteria, or auditorium space, set up station tables in advance with signs of the oasis town names. Have extra copies of the [Simulation Interview Sheet](#) on hand for each student. Also bring sticky name tags and markers.

For the day, bring in any Silk Road trade items/artifacts that you can gather. These might include silk items, “gemstones,” spices (turmeric, saffron, cardamom), paper books, metalwares, glasswares, felt, amulets, fine paper, jewelry, medicine, oil, jade, ceramic goods, tea, and the like. These can be representative items that you collect (or that students volunteer to bring in); they do not need to be historical artifacts! Set them up on the station tables.

If you wish, use the [Silk Route Simulation Order \(Teacher Version\)](#) spreadsheet to send students to the right place at the right time as the simulation gets going. (You can also create other versions of the rotation or allow for more student choice, as you like.)

★ Silk Routes Simulation (35 minutes)

Slide 2: As students enter, give them sticky name tags to fill out with their historical name and role (e.g., Seg Lhaton, Tibetan Soldier) and have them identify and go to the oasis station that makes the most sense for their character as a starting point (see the [Silk Route Simulation Order \(Teacher Version\)](#) for suggestions). Ultimately, starting groups should be close to equal in size.



Distribute trade items to merchants based in particular towns so that different products are roughly evenly distributed across oases: their purpose is to help students who may not know what silk, turmeric, jade, or felt are to envision these products and make the Silk Route trade more tangible and multisensory. Students may also bring in their own props.

Lesson 11: Simulation

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Slide 3: Explain the simulation plan to students:

A quarter of students will start at each of the four oasis towns. Between stops, they will travel to different towns. To mix the groups, use the [Silk Route Simulation Order \(Teacher Version\)](#) spreadsheet—either give it to students or project it on the wall—so students will move in different directions rather than travel together as a set.

At each oasis, students need to talk with two characters they have not yet met, completing their **Character Interview Preparation**, which they started in Lesson 9.

- Start at Oasis #1. Each student meets and converses for 4–5 minutes with two students of different roles (8–10 minutes total).
- The storyteller will perform a Silk Road story from the Dunhuang oasis, facing the other stations so all students can hear (5 minutes). (See guidance on the Storyteller profile in **Silk Road Character Profiles**.)
- Travel to Oasis #2: Each student meets and converses for 4–5 minutes with two students of different roles (8–10 minutes total). Students should try to pick types of characters they have not met yet.
- Sogdian Dancer performs at the Chang'an oasis, facing the whole group (5 minutes). (See guidance on Sogdian Dancer profile in **Silk Road Character Profiles**.)
- Travel to Oasis #3: Each student meets and converses for 4–5 minutes with two students of different roles (8–10 minutes total). Again, students should try to meet new types of characters.
- The musician performs at the Turfan oasis, facing the group so everyone can hear (5 minutes). (See guidance on the Musician profile in **Silk Road Character Profiles**.)

Model this plan for students with a quick visual walkthrough in which two students converse at Oasis #1, then divide and head toward two different oases, where they meet two different characters.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

To support ML conversation and interaction during the simulation, allow them to travel through the stations with their research partner (as needed).

Lesson 11: Simulation

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Clarify expectations with students regarding their conversations: They need to pose questions, listen attentively, make comments/observations/follow-up questions/connections with what their dialogue partner is saying, present their own story in a clear and interesting way, make eye contact, and support everyone, especially the performers.

At this point, teachers can model a sample dialogue with an eager volunteer using two of the character profiles.



CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Explain to students that when they portray figures from cultures that are not their own, you expect them to do so respectfully. Pronunciations for each name are offered so students can learn how to say their characters' names properly. Tell students to avoid speaking in accents and to avoid cultural stereotypes, both positive and negative. Characters' traits and interests should be developed according to the given profiles and historical sources that students read, not ideas from modern media.

Now, you are ready to get started! Have students introduce themselves to another traveler at their oasis and converse. As they begin, set a timer for 4–5 minutes for one-on-one conversations, and remind students to rotate within their oasis group (you can adjust the times slightly if they feel it's too short or long). Run the activity, with performers explaining their role and story before or after their "show."



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Remind students to use their **Character Interview Preparation (Sentence Frames)** to support their discussions with other characters.



Putting it Together: Simulation Debrief (15 minutes)

Slide 4: Explain to students that today, we will debrief the simulation to answer the Cluster Supporting Question: *What would a traveler or trader on the Silk Routes experience?*

Review the goal of the simulation with students. Using a Think-Pair-Share strategy, ask students to respond to the following:

- *How did you feel during the activity?*

Lesson 11: Simulation

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

- *What worked well in terms of your learning?*
- *What could have worked better?*
- *What would you do differently if you were to do the simulation again?*

After each question, once students have had a chance to share their thoughts with a partner, ask a few students to share with the class.

Slide 5: Tell students that today, we will be “putting together” what we have learned during Cluster 2

SUMMARIZE OUR LEARNING AND SHARE OUR INITIAL THINKING

Slide 6: Ask: *What did we do in Lessons 9–10?*

Have students discuss in a Think-Pair-Share format and then call on a few students to share their responses with the whole group. Record their responses on the Inquiry Chart.

Some possible answers include:

- Researched a character
- Simulated trade and travel on the Silk Routes
- Interviewed characters to learn more about their experiences

Ask: *What resources did we use in Lessons 8–10?*

Again, have students discuss in a Think-Pair-Share format and then call on a few students to share their responses.

Some possible answers include:

- Character profiles
- Internet research

SYNTHESIZE OUR IDEAS AND ANSWER THE SUPPORTING QUESTION

Lesson 11: Simulation

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

**SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS**

Remind students to use their [Summarize Language and Literacy Builder](#) with built-in models of language and sentence frames for scaffolding MLs at all proficiency levels.

Slide 7: Ask: *What did we learn that helps us answer our Supporting Question?*

Give students time to discuss in a Think-Pair-Share format once more.

Some possible answers include:

- Travelers faced harsh weather conditions, including extreme heat in the deserts and freezing temperatures in the mountains. They also encountered bandits, language barriers, and illnesses. Finding food and water was another challenge, especially in remote areas.
- Oasis towns were vital rest stops where traders could buy and sell goods, rest, and resupply before continuing their journey. They also became centers for cultural exchange, where people from different regions shared languages, religions, and ideas.
- Travelers often had to learn basic words in different languages to trade effectively. Buddhism, Islam, and other religions spread along the route, influencing local cultures. New inventions and ideas, such as papermaking from China and mathematical concepts from the Middle East also traveled along the Silk Routes.

When student groups share with the whole class, record their responses in the “What did we learn?” column of the Inquiry Chart. Prompt students to record this information on their own handouts.

RETURN TO THE INQUIRY CHART

Slide 8: Finally, revisit the questions students added under the Supporting Question in Lesson 9 as part of their Launching the Question routine and questions from the Wonder column of the Know and Wonder Chart from Lesson 1.

**TEACHING TIP**

When student groups share with the whole class, record their responses on the Inquiry Chart. Guide them to support their assertions with specific evidence and examples.

Ask probing questions to help students reach key takeaways of the cluster.

- *What challenges did travelers and traders face along the Silk Routes?*
- *What role did oasis towns like Chang'an, Dunhuang, Turfan, and Samarkand play in the Silk Road trade?*

How did cultural exchanges (languages, religions, ideas) shape the experience of travelers?

Lesson 11: Simulation

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Cluster 2: In-Depth Inquiry: Exchange at the Oasis

Ask: Have any of these questions been answered? Have any new questions come up?

Give students a few minutes to share their thoughts and ideas with the group.

Lesson 11: Simulation

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Silk Route Simulation Order (Teacher Version)

Role	First Stop	Second Stop	Third Stop
Buddhist Monk	Chang'an	Turfan	Samarkand
Buddhist Nun	Dunhuang	Turfan	Dunhuang
Merchant (Chang'an)	Chang'an	Dunhuang	Chang'an
Dancer (Chang'an)	Chang'an	Samarkand	Chang'an
Merchant (Dunhuang)	Dunhuang	Turfan	Samarkand
Envoy (Chola)	Dunhuang	Dunhuang	Chang'an
Envoy (Sogdiana)	Samarkand	Turfan	Chang'an
Horseman	Turfan	Dunhuang	Chang'an
Musician (Turfan)	Turfan	Samarkand	Turfan
Papermaker	Chang'an	Turfan	Dunhuang
Pilgrim	Samarkand	Chang'an	Dunhuang
Princess	Chang'an	Dunhuang	Turfan
Sailor	Dunhuang	Chang'an	Dunhuang
Merchant (Samarkand)	Samarkand	Dunhuang	Samarkand
Shipmaster	Dunhuang	Chang'an	Samarkand
Silk Producer	Chang'an	Dunhuang	Turfan
Soldier	Dunhuang	Samarkand	Turfan
Storyteller (Dunhuang)	Turfan	Chang'an	Dunhuang
Traveling Merchant (Baghdad)	Turfan	Samarkand	Turfan
Traveling Merchant (Sogdiana)	Samarkand	Turfan	Dunhuang
Merchant (Turfan)	Turfan	Samarkand	Turfan

The Silk Road Legacy

What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance?

CONTENTS

Lesson 12

Cluster 3 Launch

Lesson 13

The Silk Road Legacy
Today

Lesson 14

Responses to the Uyghur
Crisis

Lesson 15

Formative Assessment

Lesson 16

Unit Synthesis

Overview

With the Silk Route travel and contact came an exchange of ideas, religions, technologies, cultural forms, and tolerance in different ways. In the last group of lessons in Cluster 3, students investigate ancient and current policies toward religious and ethnic diversity, specifically in China. They ask: What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance? The cluster culminates with students writing a one-pager that illustrates the contrasts between religious tolerance in the past and present along the Silk Road.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this cluster, students should be able to...

- Evaluate sources on how tolerant the Chinese were of foreign religions in the first millennium and over time in the region of the old Silk Routes.
- Explain how Chinese reactions to religious and ethnic influences from abroad have shifted over time, historically and today.
- Determine what the Uyghur situation in today's China reveals about what happened in recent history to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance.
- Construct social studies arguments to introduce and contextualize topics (WIDA ELD-SS.6-8.Argue.Expressive).

Vocabulary

TIER 2	TIER 3
persecution	ethnic minority group imperial separatism

Cluster Focus Standards

Practice Standards

STANDARD	LESSON(S)
PS 2: Develop and evaluate relevant guiding questions with peer support.	12-16
PS 5: Critique the usefulness of a historical source for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.	12-16

Content Standards

STANDARD	LESSON(S)
7.T2b.2f: China's role in trade across Asia and to and from Africa and Europe along the Silk Roads and the introduction of Buddhism in China starting c. 1st century CE.	12-16
7.T2c.1: Trace the spread of Buddhism from India in the 4th century BCE to China, Korea, and Japan, and its development in Japan from the 6th through the 13th century CE; explain significant cultural contributions of ancient Japan (e.g., Buddhist philosophy, art, calligraphy, and temple and landscape architecture).	12-16

Literacy Standards

STANDARD	LESSON(S)
RCA-H.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, quoting or paraphrasing as appropriate.	12-16

Unit 3, Cluster 3 Inquiry Chart (Teacher Version)

Unit EQ	How does trade affect ideas and culture?
Cluster SQ	What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance?
What questions will we ask?	

What did we do?	What did we learn that helps us answer our question(s)?
Lesson 12: Analyzed a map of Chang'an and read the Imperial Edict of the Eighth Month by Tang Emperor Wuzong.	The Chinese welcomed these “outside” religions; Buddhist monasteries and temples were everywhere in Chang'an. Buddhism was fundamental to life in Tang China, but emperors had differing views on it because it was a wealthy institution that did not pay taxes. Emperor Wuzong was a devout, even fanatical, Daoist. After persecuting foreign religions for several years, in 845 CE, he issued the edict of the eighth month. Followers of Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Manichaeism, and Zoroastrianism were persecuted. Their centers of worship were closed, and the government took their property. Over 4,600 Buddhist temples were destroyed, but the religion survived. The other religions were largely wiped out in China, never to recover. Emperor Xuanzong took the throne in 846 CE and restored a policy of religious tolerance.
Lesson 13: Jigsaw to investigate tolerance in China based on the experiences of Uyghur people in Xinjiang Province.	The current situation with the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, China, demonstrates a complete reversal of the historical legacy of tolerance associated with the Silk Road as the region is now marked by widespread repression, mass detention, and systematic cultural suppression of the Uyghur Muslim minority, effectively erasing the once-celebrated diversity and religious freedom that characterized the Silk Road era; essentially, where once different cultures and faiths coexisted peacefully, the Uyghurs are now facing severe restrictions and persecution under Chinese government policies.

What did we do?	What did we learn that helps us answer our question(s)?
Lesson 14: Reviewed UN Global Goal 16 and analyzed the global responses to the Uyghur Crisis	Global responses to the Uyghur Crisis. How religious tolerance has evolved, encompassing religious diversity, freedom of worship, the government's role, religious education, and cultural exchange.

LESSON 12

Cluster 3 Launch

EQ How does trade affect ideas and culture?

SQ What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Evaluate sources on how tolerant the Chinese were of foreign religions in the 1st millennium and over time in the region of the old Silk Routes.

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE

Evaluate primary source texts to identify and summarize the main idea and describe evidence of Chinese tolerance and intolerance toward foreign religions.

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students inquire how China reacted to religious influences from outside its borders, asking: *What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance?* Students examine evidence through a city map of Chang'an that reveals a mix of religious institutions and a 9th-century imperial edict banning the practice of those same religions. With the latter, they read an excerpt and determine the central idea. Students see that at one point, xenophobia came to cosmopolitan Chang'an and permanently altered the religious landscape there—no legacy is secure for all time! Students write a claim, citing text evidence, in response to the Supporting Question.

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, RCA-H.6-8.1

See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS

- ☐ [Lesson 12 Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [Cluster 3 Launch](#)
- ☐ [Edict of the Eighth Month](#)
- ☐ [Cluster 3 Inquiry Chart](#)
- ☐ [Cluster 3 Inquiry Chart \(Teacher Version\)](#)
- ☐ [Vocabulary Support for Lessons 12–14](#)
- ☐ Lesson 1: Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart

VOCABULARY

imperial
persecution

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
Launching the Question	50

Lesson 12: Cluster 3 Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- [Vocabulary Support for Lessons 12-14 \(Graphic Organizer\)](#): Helps students engage with unit vocabulary
- [Edict of the Eighth Month \(Sentence Stems\)](#): Supports the collection of evidence and written responses

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer, if possible, to discuss the Tang Chang'an Map. Students will likely need to use translation to complete the questions on the Sentence Starters handout and would benefit from an additional visual word bank of choices to complete the sentences for the claim.
- [Look Fors](#): Complete sentences using the frames provided should include relevant Tier 1 and 2 words.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- Encourage students to use the Sentence Starters handout and translation if necessary to complete the questions and write their claim.
- [Look Fors](#): Complete simple and compound sentences should include relevant Tier 2 words and some of their own words.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students should be able to complete the activity independently.
- [Look Fors](#): Compound/complex sentences should include more precise Tier 3 academic vocabulary and a great level of detail. Answers should be mostly in students' own words.



ADVANCE PREPARATION

Determine if you want to work with the Inquiry Chart on chart paper or digitally. You will need separate class copies for each class period. Students will also need to have their own copies to work with throughout the Cluster, either digitally or printed.

Have each class period's Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart from Lesson 1 easily accessible.

Print four double-sided copies of the [Edict of the Eighth Month](#) handout, and sort them into four copies of each numbered source excerpt (1–6). This will create individual handouts for each student in the six groups of four. (Adjust numbers for your class size.)

Lesson 12: Cluster 3 Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

**TEACHING TIP**

In this lesson, students will think comparatively about past and present interactions of peoples living in northwest China—specifically an area of the ancient Silk Routes encompassing the Taklamakan Desert oases and the Tarim Basin. The lesson begins with a thought puzzle about the past and then jumps forward in time to investigate the relationship between the peoples of this region and the state of China today based on the Supporting Question.



Launching the Question (50 minutes)

SPARK CURIOSITY

Slide 2: Activate students' prior knowledge by asking: *What did we learn about in Cluster 1–2?*

Students will share information about the important goods and ideas that traveled on the Silk Routes from Cluster 1.

Review the “Wonders” and ask students which questions have been answered and can be moved to the “Know” column of the chart. Add student responses to the Know column.

Remind students that the Launching the Question routine involves interacting with sources and recording their observations and questions.

INTRODUCE THE SUPPORTING QUESTION AND ELICIT INITIAL THINKING

Slide 3: Introduce the Cluster 3 Supporting Question. Distribute [Cluster 3 Launch](#).



What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance?

**SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS**

Consider using the [Vocabulary Support for Lessons 12–14](#) to help students engage with cluster vocabulary.

Ask: *What do you already know about this Supporting Question?*

Slide 4: Prompt students to recall and share what they know about this topic from their initial work with the **Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart** and previous learnings (Unit 1 and 2, their lives, and/or other classes and resources).

Lesson 12: Cluster 3 Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Students will Think-Pair-Share to record what they know. After students talk with a partner, have a few students share what they know. Add student responses to the Know and Wonder Chart.

Introduce the Religions in Tang Chang'an Map

Slides 5–6: Divide the students into small groups of four. Then introduce this activity by telling them that they will look at a map of the ancient city of Chang'an to see what it tells us about Chinese tolerance of religions that originated outside of their empire.

Click on the link, then click on the map to enlarge and zoom in. (If you share the link, students can zoom in on their devices.) At the time, Chang'an was the largest city in the world and the cultural center of East Asia.

Ask students to take 2 minutes to examine the map closely and then Think-Pair-Share with a partner for 2 minutes about what each has noticed and wondered.

Ask the student groups to consider these questions:

- How many religions do you see represented on this map? **(4)**
- Where did you find a reference to religion? **(in the map key)**
 - *Reinforce the idea that people like to be able to practice their faith wherever they go, so traders built shrines and temples far from their homes.*
- What can this map tell us about China's tolerance or rejection of Buddhism and other foreign religions? **(The Chinese welcomed these "outside" religions; Buddhist monasteries and temples were everywhere in Chang'an.)**
- Are any faiths that we studied missing? If so, why do you think this is? **(Manichaeism and Islam are omitted—both were present in Tang-dynasty Chang'an—so these are limitations of the map or may reflect uncertainty about the location of some of these structures. Mosques were in fact in the city by 742 CE.)**
- From what you have learned so far, how religiously tolerant was China during the time of the Silk Routes? **(very!)**



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Encourage students to use their [Question Language and Literacy Builder](#) to ask questions and write statements about what they wonder.

Lesson 12: Cluster 3 Launch

Unless otherwise noted, Investigating History is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Slide 7: Introduce the first vocabulary word students need to know for this lesson: *persecution*.

- Say the word: *persecution*.
- Use the word in context: *The Buddhists faced persecution for their beliefs.*
- Share the student-friendly definition: *when someone or a group is treated unfairly or cruelly because of their beliefs, race, or political views.*
- Engage with the word: *Some options include inviting students to answer a question using the word, provide additional examples, or restate the definition in their own words. Encourage multilingual learners to translate the word into their home language.*

Slide 8: Introduce the second vocabulary word students need to know for this lesson: *imperial*.

- Say the word: *imperial*.
- Use the word in context: *The people read the imperial order posted in town.*
- Share the student-friendly definition: *having to do with an empire, emperor, or empress.*
- Engage with the word: *Some options include inviting students to answer a question using the word, provide additional examples, or restate the definition in their own words. Encourage multilingual learners to translate the word into their home language.*

Ask students for examples of these words, in context, from the past or present, such as “imperial palace.”

Introduce the Imperial Edict

Explain to students that although the city map of Chang'an gives a picture of religious harmony, in the imperial court and among the religious community, there was constant competition: Daoism and Confucianism versus Buddhism and other foreign religions. The Tang emperors were Daoist, but court officials had mixed leanings and sympathies towards other religions. It mattered who was in power!

Slide 9: Introduce the Tang Emperor Wuzong. Explain to students that Emperor Wuzong persecuted foreign religions and issued an official edict forbidding their practice in 845

Lesson 12: Cluster 3 Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

CE. Students will work in small groups to read and analyze one section of the edict.

Slide 10: Divide the students into six groups and distribute copies of one double-sided page of [Edict of the Eighth Month](#) to each group. (All group members should have the same page.)

Go over the background and directions at the top of the handout. Then, ask students to take 5 minutes to read their selection of the edict, looking for evidence of the threats posed by Buddhism (according to the edict).

After the first reading, students should use their own words to note evidence. Then they should state the main idea of their passage in the box at right. Complete sentences are unnecessary; phrases or even single words may be noted.

Facilitate a whole-class discussion to collate the findings of the six groups on this rich source. At the end, emphasize the core insight that at times, even in the Silk Road era, officials were able to stoke religious intolerance to justify harsh policies they wanted to put in place for other reasons. It could be manipulated. (That said, intolerance was more the exception than the rule. In this case, the policy only lasted 4 years.)

Lastly, have students turn the page over and read the edict's outcome. It notes that the persecutions of 842–845 CE spelled the end of (or at least greatly reduced the presence of) most foreign religions in China. From that period, only Buddhism and Islam lasted and grew.

Slide 11: Project the Supporting Question once again: *What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance?*

- Have students write a claim in response to it, using sources from the lesson.
- Ask them to support their claim with evidence, quoting or paraphrasing from sources as appropriate.

Note: For strong claims, they should make an arguable statement and logically connect it to at least one piece of evidence.

DEVELOP THE INQUIRY CHART

Slide 12: Ask students: *What smaller questions will help us answer the Cluster 2 Supporting Question: What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance?*



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

To support ML students, assign them to Group 1, and use [Edict of the Eighth Month \(Sentence Stems\)](#) to guide them through the process.

Lesson 12: Cluster 3 Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Distribute a small stack of sticky notes to each table group. Ask students to build upon their observations and ask questions. They should write each question on a separate sticky note.

Prompt students to share their questions within their group. Tell students to choose important questions that they want to be able to answer by the end of the unit.

- Remind students that the Inquiry Chart is where we will post our questions and track what we learn throughout the unit.
- It will help us keep track of our progress in answering the Supporting Question and the Essential Question.
- Request that each group choose a spokesperson to share the group's questions with the class.
- Ask spokespeople to read their questions out loud as they come to the Inquiry Chart and post them under the Cluster Supporting Question.

Invite students to share their questions with the whole class.

- Consolidate or synthesize questions related to the Supporting Question as needed so there are 3–4 representative questions.
- Add these 3–4 questions to the “What questions will we ask?” section of the class's Inquiry Chart.
- Prompt students to record the questions on their own Inquiry Chart handouts.

PREVIEW THE LEARNING AHEAD

Share with students that in this Cluster, they will be working through a simulation by exploring question development, researching sources, and developing characters.

Lesson 12: Cluster 3 Launch

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

LESSON 13

The Silk Road Legacy Today

EQ How does trade affect ideas and culture?

SQ What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Determine what the Uyghur situation in today's China reveals about the Silk Road legacy of tolerance.

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE

Describe how the Chinese government and Uyghur people interacted, and summarize why the Silk Road legacy of religious tolerance shifted, with reasoning and evidence.

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson investigates how the historic Silk Route legacy of ethnic and religious tolerance is faring in contemporary China through a look at the situation of today's Uyghur people of Xinjiang province (in Northwest China). The Uyghurs provide a case study of China's attitudes regarding ethnic and religious acceptance versus forced assimilation and an important present-day connection for students. In this lesson, they use a mixed evidence set and "investigator roles" to answer the question: *What does the Uyghur situation today reveal about what happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance?* This activity also provides an opportunity to reflect on the credibility of sources in a close-out exercise. The lesson that follows asks students to consider some actions that could be or have been taken to speak out for minority rights in alignment with the United Nations's Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, RCA-H.6-8.1

See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS

- ☐ [Lesson 13 Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [The Silk Road Legacy Today Student Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [Uyghur Investigation: Expert Topic Assignment Cards](#)
- ☐ [Envoys on the Silk Routes and Their Gifts](#)
- ☐ [Uyghur Investigation \(Teacher Version\)](#)
- ☐ [Keeping Up-to-Date on Uyghurs](#)
- ☐ [Uyghur Investigation Jigsaw](#)
- ☐ Lesson 12: Vocabulary Support for Lessons 12-14

VOCABULARY

ethnic minority group
separatism

Lesson 13: The Silk Road Legacy Today

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
Activator: A Thought Puzzle	5
Investigating Sources: Investigating The Situation of Today's Uyghurs in Xinjiang	25
Check-In	5
Reflection Exercise: How Credible Were Our Sources?	10
Exit Ticket	5

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- [Uyghur Investigation Jigsaw \(Sentence Starters\)](#): Supports the collection of evidence and written responses

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Encourage them to use the Sentence Starters handout, especially the sentence frames in the Connect section. Students will benefit from additional support like a bilingual dictionary, using sources more accessible with translation support, such as B and E, and watching videos on their own so they can slow them down and add subtitles in their home language.
- [Look Fors](#): Complete sentences using the prompts provided should include relevant Tier 1 and 2 words. Students may share information with their home group by showing their written answers if they are unable to read all sentences aloud.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Encourage them to use the Sentence Starters handout. Allow students to watch videos on their own so they can slow them down and add subtitles in their home language.
- [Look Fors](#): Complete sentences using the prompts provided should include relevant Tier 2 words. Students should be able to read their sentences aloud to their home group.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students should be able to complete the activity independently although they may need more time to prepare information for their home group.
- [Look Fors](#): Compound/complex sentences should use more precise Tier 3 academic vocabulary and a greater level of detail when explaining their sources.

Lesson 13: The Silk Road Legacy Today

Unless otherwise noted, Investigating History is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

**ADVANCE PREPARATION**

Consider dividing students into “home groups” and determine which “expert role/question” to give each student. Use these assignments to create your groups based on student needs.

Copy and cut up the role assignments from this document: [Uyghur Investigation: Expert Topic Assignment Cards](#). Labeling the expert assignment cards with the assigned students may be helpful—the [Uyghur Investigation \(Teacher Version\)](#) indicates which sources a particular expert will utilize if you wish to differentiate.

The Evidence Packet is contained in the Lesson 13 Student Slide Deck; students can use it digitally or print it from the slides. Note that some sources are media links (to short news videos), so a few computer devices will be needed per team.

For Lesson 13's closing exercise, students will engage in a 6 Corners activity. You will need to print and hang the six sources around your classroom, each in a different spot with room for students to stand.

**TEACHING TIP**

In this lesson, students will think comparatively about past and present interactions between peoples living in northwest China, specifically an area of the ancient Silk Routes encompassing the Taklamakan Desert oases and the Tarim Basin. The lesson begins with a thought puzzle about the past and then jumps forward in time to investigate the relationship between the peoples of this region and the state of China today based on the Supporting Question.

Activator: A Thought Puzzle (5 minutes)

Slide 2: Ask students to respond to the thought puzzle (or paradox) based on their learning in the In-Depth Inquiry. Tell students that the historian Valerie Hansen has (in her book *The Silk Road*) called the Silk Road:

“...one of the least traveled routes in human history”

AND

“...one of the most transformative superhighways in human history”

Give students a moment to read and consider this puzzle. Then lead a class brainstorm to unpack its possible meaning:

How could the Silk Road be a least-traveled route and a transformative (change-bringing) superhighway?

Lesson 13: The Silk Road Legacy Today

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Establish that the value of a route can be measured in more than one way: by how much use it gets, by its immediate impact on the places it connects, or by its legacy (what has lasted). The actual number of people who traveled the Silk Road was small. Still, it mattered greatly in world history because it carried many forms of culture to new places: religions, arts, languages, and new technologies. Some have lasted into the present, while others have been reshaped or have disappeared.

Slide 3: Show students the Supporting Question they'll consider in this and the next lesson. They will investigate this question with a case study from the present, grounded in their learning about the past.



CULTURAL COMPETENCE

The current plight of the Uyghurs and other Muslims in China is a sensitive political issue. While teaching about human rights issues worldwide is important, it is equally important to be clear on the rationale. In this case, that is to surface a shift in policy toward the peoples of this region that represents a major break from the historical legacy of the Silk Routes, partly due to trade and economic concerns. It also is a chance to consider how a minority group has experienced and responded to their treatment. As the details of the Uyghur situation may change, teachers should stay updated on the news before teaching these lessons. Some additional resources ([Keeping Up-to-Date on Uyghurs](#) and [Envoys on the Silk Routes and Their Gifts](#)) are provided to keep the news current.

For this lesson, it is also important for teachers to understand that Uyghur history is contested between Uyghur and Chinese authorities. Many Western scholars believe that today's Uyghurs are not direct descendants of the Uyghurs of the Tang Dynasty Silk Routes, but more a coalition of different ethnicities, including migrants from the Uyghur Khaganate of 744–840 CE—Indo-Europeans, Mongols, and others—that gradually coalesced and adopted the name “Uyghur” only in the twentieth century. All kinds of people moved to northern Xinjiang later in the first millennium, so “Uyghur” does not refer to a set historical territory.

Finally, it is responsible to note to students that human rights abuses occur around the world, including at times with the knowledge or even support of the US government. Shining a light on the Chinese government is not intended to suggest that human rights violations are unique to China. Some teachers have found it helpful to contextualize these lessons for students by mentioning US government actions toward vulnerable minority populations (e.g., the detention of migrant children in recent years and Japanese American internment in the past). Last, you should frequently remind students that the unjust actions of governments are almost always opposed by some or many people within those societies, even under authoritarian governments (including in China today), where speaking out brings tremendous risk. For example, you can read "[Chinese Dissident Artist Ai Weiwei On Masks, Uyghurs and Democracy](#)" from VICE, which discusses Ai Weiwei's denouncement of Uyghur policy.

Lesson 13: The Silk Road Legacy Today

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.



Investigating Sources: Investigating The Situation of Today's Uyghurs in Xinjiang (25

minutes)

Slide 4: Explain that in this lesson, the class will look specifically at a province of China called Xinjiang (“Shin-jiang”), which contains many ancient Silk Route towns. Show students that on this map, Xinjiang is the red region—the furthest western area in China. The yellow lines are the Silk Routes running through it.

Tell students that within Xinjiang, they’ll be looking at the Chinese treatment of the Uyghur people (pronounced “WEE-gur”)

Slide 5: Explain that the Uyghurs are an *ethnic minority group* in China and that this is the first vocabulary word in this lesson.

- Say the word: *ethnic minority group*.
- Use the word in context: There are 55 officially recognized ethnic minority groups in China that are not Han Chinese. (Han Chinese is the largest ethnic group.)
- Share the student-friendly definition: *a group of people sharing a common and distinctive culture, religion, and/or language who are not in the cultural majority.*

Slide 6: Review the Investigating Sources routine. Explain that students will investigate the current situation of the Uyghur people in Xinjiang Province. This situation is difficult to understand, partly because information does not flow freely from this region of China and partly because the Chinese government and most other groups disagree about what is happening in Xinjiang. Students will use an evidence set with several kinds of sources to help them find answers.

Inform students that they will work in groups using a jigsaw strategy. During a jigsaw, you are assigned to a home group and an expert group.

Everyone in the home group will investigate a different topic. You will work in your expert group to learn about your topic and become an expert.



TEACHING TIP

This Xinjiang map is the only open-source map that depicts this information. Students should readily see two simple features (despite the lack of detail): (1) Xinjiang is orange on the larger map, and it has many Silk Routes, and (2) the inset map at the lower right is all of China, and it depicts the location of Xinjiang within China.

Lesson 13: The Silk Road Legacy Today

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Each person in the expert group will be responsible for reporting on their topic knowledge to their home group.

At the end of the activity, each group will share what they have learned.

Slide 7: Assign each student to a home group of four students. Assign a number for each.

Create “expert groups” of students from different “home groups” who will investigate the same topic. Ensure that expert groups are heterogeneous to provide support for all learners.

Each investigation team will collaborate to answer this overall question:

What does the Uyghur situation today reveal about what happened to the legacy of tolerance in an old Silk Road region (Xinjiang)?

Slide 8: Form the expert groups using the numbers assigned to each member of the home group. For example, all #1s will work together as expert group 1.

Group 1: How the Chinese government is treating the Uyghur people in Xinjiang

Group 2: How Uyghur people are responding to their treatment

Group 3: How the Chinese government is treating the practice of Islam in Xinjiang

Group 4: Reasons behind Chinese government actions toward Uyghur people

Slide 9: Review the activity directions and reinforce how you want the expert group to collaborate.

- The group should spend time reading, discussing, and helping each other understand the religion and its spread.

Give assigned “expert topics” to each group along with the [Uyghur Investigation Jigsaw](#) and Lesson 13 Student Slide Deck (share the slides digitally).

Lesson 13: The Silk Road Legacy Today

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Each expert group will examine one aspect of the Uyghur situation—the “expert topic” they were assigned. They will identify and use the evidence most useful to their topic. They won’t need to read or watch every source in the set but must draw from at least two.

Slide 10: After 10 minutes, reform the home groups. Experts on each topic will share knowledge with their home group members. After each member of the home group shares, students should use their collective knowledge of all four topics to answer the overall question by co writing a question response (two to three sentences).

Expert topics are:

- Find out how the Chinese government is treating Uyghur people in Xinjiang.
- Find out how Uyghur people are responding to their treatment.
- Find out how the Chinese government is treating the practice of Islam in Xinjiang.
- Find reasons behind the Chinese government's actions toward Uyghur people (stated and/or hidden reasons).



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Provide students with [Uyghur Investigation Jigsaw \(Sentence Starters\)](#); the sentence frames in the ‘Connect’ section of this scaffold will be particularly helpful to students.

As needed, coach students on strategies for finding a helpful source (e.g., examining titles, hunting for keywords, skimming). This should be a review skill. Notice that the source titles were written specifically for cueing and preselection.



MAKE CONNECTIONS

Remind students that some of them represented characters from the [Uyghur Khaganate](#) (the large northern Uyghur empire) during Cluster 2’s Exchange at the Oasis simulation ([Silk Road Character Profiles](#): Uyghur Horseman and Turfan Musician). When that empire fell apart in the ninth century, some of its survivors formed a new kingdom in the northern Taklamakan oases towns and mixed with the Indo-European peoples living there. For centuries, these ethnically mixed peoples went by many different names. They only brought the term “Uyghur” back into use in the twentieth century.

Circulate to ensure that students can access the sources. Because three vocabulary words are defined in context, check that students understand them as you visit each group (separatism, detention (internment) camps, and ethnic minority groups).

Note: See [Uyghur Investigation \(Teacher Version\)](#) for the sources and anticipated responses.

Lesson 13: The Silk Road Legacy Today

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

**TEACHING TIP**

Today's Uyghurs cannot draw a direct line of descent between themselves and the Uyghurs of the heyday of the Silk Road since people have migrated and mixed into the population over the centuries while empires have come and gone. These are not exactly the same people, although they live in the old Silk Route towns and use the same name.

Slide 11: After ten minutes, move the teams toward their collaborative written answer to the Supporting Question (bottom of the Graphic Organizer).

Students' responses should reflect an understanding of the following:

- The current situation with the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, China, demonstrates a complete reversal of the historical legacy of tolerance associated with the Silk Road as the region is now marked by widespread repression, mass detention, and systematic cultural suppression of the Uyghur Muslim minority, effectively erasing the once-celebrated diversity and religious freedom that characterized the Silk Road era; essentially, where once different cultures and faiths coexisted peacefully, the Uyghurs are now facing severe restrictions and persecution under Chinese government policies.
- Key points highlighting the contrast with the Silk Road legacy:
 - Religious freedom: The Silk Road historically facilitated the exchange of religions, with diverse faiths coexisting along the trade routes, while today, Uyghurs are subjected to severe restrictions on their Islamic practices, including forced removal of religious symbols and mandatory attendance at "reeducation camps."
 - Cultural preservation: The Silk Road was known for its rich cultural exchange and fusion, but the current situation in Xinjiang sees attempts to erase Uyghur culture through language restrictions, forced assimilation, and the destruction of cultural heritage sites.

Lesson 13: The Silk Road Legacy Today

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

- Open movement: The Silk Road facilitated the free movement of people and goods, while the Uyghurs are now subjected to intense surveillance, police checkpoints, and restrictions on travel within Xinjiang.
- Peaceful coexistence: The historical Silk Road was a hub for diverse communities living together peacefully. At the same time, the Uyghur situation is characterized by accusations of systematic discrimination and abuse by the Chinese government against the Uyghur population.



Check-In (5 minutes)

Slide 12: Debrief the activity by directing students to the last page of [Uyghur Investigation Jigsaw](#) for the Head, Heart, Conscience activity.

For this activity, students should individually reflect using words or images on the guiding questions in each Graphic Organizer section. Then, they can pair up and share their responses with a partner. Bring the whole group back together and allow students to share with the whole group.

Head: What information did you learn from these sources? Is any information contested? What questions do you still have?

Heart: What emotions does this topic raise for you? What aspect of the source stands out to you the most and why?

Conscience: What questions about right or wrong, fairness or injustice, does this source raise for you?

Tell students that during tomorrow's lesson, we will explore their responses to what is happening with the Uyghur people and discuss what they can do to take informed action.

Lesson 13: The Silk Road Legacy Today

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Reflection Exercise: How Credible Were Our Sources? *(10 minutes)*

Slide 13: To finish the lesson, students will engage in a brief media literacy exercise on assessing the credibility of the sources already introduced.



MAKE CONNECTIONS

News media analysis and information literacy skills are integrated across the 6th and 7th-grade years in bite-sized exercises like this one. This unit, for example, probed the social media concept of influencers (Lesson 1) and challenged students to consider how visuals and text work together to create messaging in a news report (Lesson 4). If you have additional time, these concepts could be fruitfully extended into more elaborate lessons on critical media literacy.



BUILD LITERACY

An underlying purpose of the exercise is to start students thinking about what professional journalists and news sources are and how they contribute to civic life and justice here and around the globe. This is knowledge that cannot be taken for granted. Many students have had limited exposure to newspapers and other professional news media.

Useful pedagogical resources on news media literacy and assessing credibility include "[Teaching Adolescents How to Evaluate the Quality of Online Information](#)" (Edutopia), "[Evaluating Sources in a “Post-Truth” World](#)" (*New York Times*), and materials from [Project Look Sharp](#) and [NewseumED](#). Whenever possible, partner with or tap the expertise of your school librarian or the public library's children's librarian—the true information literacy experts!

Slide 14: While you pass out blank sticky notes—one per student—have them remind you what makes a source credible (trustworthy or believable).

Explain to students that professional journalists are a group in our society that is very concerned about the credibility of information. The left column shows the ethical standards for journalists publishing information in newspapers and news sources. The right column shows some standards or criteria for evaluating the credibility of sources—these should already be familiar from prior units. Read these concepts and criteria, and invite students' questions and comments.

Lesson 13: The Silk Road Legacy Today

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Slide 15: Ask students to revisit the sources from the Uyghur evidence set and reflect on their level of credibility.

Begin with a quick recap of the six sources from the Lesson 13 Student Slide Deck using reading volunteers (a two- or three-sentence summary is sufficient). For each item, have the class identify the source type and creator.

Slide 16: Then, ask students to rise and stand by the evidence they believe to be the most credible. (These sources should be posted around the room.) This is meant to be a first impression, so encourage students to jump right in.

With students standing in place, conduct a class debrief:

- What patterns stand out?
- Which sources won the most student votes in this first impression, and why?
- Were there any that no one selected—and again, why?



TEACHING TIP

If your students have many ideas, this can deepen organically into a conversation about what news and information sources should and should not be trusted. How is a “researcher-activist” different from or similar to a professional journalist? To what extent do we need to verify the information that comes from a government, and does it matter how democratic that government is? If your students are just beginning to think about such issues, proceed directly to the next lesson step.



Exit Ticket *(5 minutes)*

Slide 17: Close the exercise with students making a connection. Explain that the Exit Ticket today is a sticky note comment.

After visiting the six sources of evidence, ask students to post one comment about one source. They should comment on something interesting they notice related to the accuracy, the author’s perspective, or the purpose of their chosen source. Have students put their sticky notes on their selected source.

Lesson 13: The Silk Road Legacy Today

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Uyghur Investigation (Teacher Version)

The Silk Route Legacy Today

Expert group topics:

Group 1: Find out how the Chinese government is treating Uyghur people in Xinjiang.

Group 2: Find out how Uyghur people are responding to their treatment.

Group 3: Find out how the Chinese government is treating the practice of Islam in Xinjiang.

Group 4: Find reasons behind the Chinese government's actions toward Uyghur people (stated and/or hidden reasons).

1) Evidence Packet Item A:

"[Uyghur culture under threat: Australia's Uyghur's fight to save their traditions](#)," reported by Erin Handley for ABC News In-depth (Australian public broadcast service)

Source type: public television news report

- Highly relevant for Topics 2 and 3
- Also relevant for Topics 1 and 4 (what the Chinese government says)

Additional source background: Erin Handley is a journalist with special expertise in Asia-Pacific issues. Learn about [Erin Handley's work for Australian public broadcasting](#), and see [Erin Handley's professional website](#). This source highlights Uyghur agency and the importance of fighting back against cultural erasure; students may need help to understand that these Uyghur people are refugees living in Australia, where they are free to celebrate their cultural and religious traditions.

2) Evidence Packet Item B:

[Why the Government of China Believes It Must Control the Uighurs](#)

Source type: Chinese government statements

- Highly relevant for Topic 4

- Also relevant for Topics 1 and 3

Additional source background: The extraordinary “secret statements” quoted/summarized here were leaked to *New York Times* reporters in 2019. Original sources are found at [“Why does China fear the Uighurs so much?”](#) (*News Decoder*) and [“Absolutely No Mercy”: Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims](#) (*New York Times*).

For clarity and simplicity, this source is presented as the direct words of Chinese government officials; the more complex reality is that they are Chinese government quotes and/or paraphrases compiled by Western reporters with access to Chinese officials and their views. In upcoming years, students will be prepared to tackle that complexity.

This source gives students an opportunity to decode an item of evidence with a strong bias that distorts the truth in order to advance a government agenda. Note that sources are not inherently noncredible; it depends on how they are used. This source does a reliable job of revealing what Chinese government officials are saying about their Uyghur policy. Let students’ questions and comments guide how much background you need to share.

3) Evidence Packet Item C:

[“‘Absolutely No Mercy’: Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims,”](#) reported by Austin Ramzy and Chris Buckley, *New York Times* (November 16, 2019) (excerpts, reading level adapted; full source: [“Absolutely No Mercy”: Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims](#)).

Source type: newspaper

- Highly relevant for Topics 1 and 3

Additional source background: Chris Buckley, chief China correspondent for the *New York Times*, is a Pulitzer Prize winner with over 30 years’ experience in Asia-Pacific reporting. See [Chris Buckley’s New York Times profile page](#). Austin Ramzy is a *New York Times* reporter based in Hong Kong; see [Austin Ramzy’s New York Times profile page](#). This source provides an opportunity to reflect on the dedicated work of professional journalists trying to tell the truth in hard circumstances. Students may need to understand what a “leak” is and why journalists face danger reporting from Xinjiang province.

4) Evidence Packet Item D:

"[Inside China's 'thought transition' camps](#)," reported by BBC News' China correspondent John Sudworth

Source type: video investigative report by a news correspondent

- Highly relevant for Topics 2 and 3

Additional source background: The BBC has found new evidence of the increasing control and suppression of Islam in China's far western region of Xinjiang—including the widespread destruction of mosques. Authorities provided rare access to religious sites and senior Islamic officials to support their claim that their policies only target violent religious extremism, not faith itself.

5) Evidence Packet Item E:

"[China Uighurs: Detained for beards, veils and internet browsing](#)," reported by James Landale for *BBC News*

Source type: public television news report

- Highly relevant for Topics 1 and 3
- Also relevant for Topics 2 and 4

Additional source background: *BBC News* is a highly respected not-for-profit and the leading news source in Great Britain. James Landale is a seasoned global reporter with expertise in diplomatic and political issues; see more of his work at [James Landale's BBC page](#). This source touches on all four expert topics in an accessible way, so it is one that all students can rely on.

6) Evidence Packet Item F:

The Atlantic magazine produced an episode about a Uyghur teen's life after escaping genocide for the podcast series: [The Experiment Podcast](#).

Source type: podcast interview

- Highly relevant for Topics 1 and 2
- Also relevant for Topic 4

Additional source background: This podcast aired on the series *The Experiment*. During the episode, Aséna shares her family's story of fleeing to the US to escape genocide, adjusting to newfound freedom, and trying to deal with the grief and guilt of being a refugee. This episode's guests include Aséna Tahir Izgil and her father, Tahir Hamut Izgil, a Uyghur poet and author. This episode was fact-checked by Yvonne Rolzhausen.

LESSON 14

Responses to the Uyghur Crisis

EQ How does trade affect ideas and culture?

SQ What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Analyze UN Sustainable Development Goal 16 and responses to the Uyghur crisis to plan for taking informed action.

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE

Using evidence and reasoning from the group jigsaw, compare and contrast the religious tolerance during the Silk Road and the current Uyghur crisis by creating a one-pager.

LESSON OVERVIEW

How do groups like the Uyghurs respond to their outsider status and oppression? How can others help respond on their behalf? This lesson builds on knowledge of the Uyghur situation previously developed. In this lesson, students consider some actions that could or have been taken by advocacy groups, world powers, Uyghur people, and individuals to speak out for the minority rights of the Uyghurs. They analyze these as being aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) carried over from Unit 2. As the Putting It Together component of this lesson, students create a one-pager to inform others in their school community about the Uyghur situation in Xinjiang and what could be done. Here, students take their own informed action while organizing diverse information and citing textual evidence in a synthesizing activity.

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, RCA-H.6-8.1

See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS

- ☐ [Lesson 14 Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [SDG 16 and Global Response](#)
- ☐ [Cluster 3 Inquiry Chart](#)
- ☐ [Cluster 3 Inquiry Chart \(Teacher Version\)](#)
- ☐ Lesson 12: Vocabulary Support for Lessons 12-14
- ☐ Lesson 1: Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart

Lesson 14: Responses to the Uyghur Crisis

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
Activator: “Pomegranate Propaganda” Simile	10
Investigating Sources: Thinking About Global Justice: How to Take Action for Minority Rights	20
Putting it Together: Silk Road Legacy: Religious Tolerance	20

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- [Observe Language and Literacy Builder](#): Assists and supports students in the Investigating Sources routine
- [Connect Language and Literacy Builder](#): Assists and supports students in the Investigating Sources routine

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Assign fewer questions for the Goal 16 and Global Responses handout. Provide a small selection of sentence starters from the LLBs that students can use for their answers, and allow them to translate questions and text.
- [Look Fors](#): Complete simple sentences using the frames provided should include relevant Tier 1 and 2 words.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Students can use sentence starters from the LLBs for their answers, and allow them to translate questions and text as necessary for comprehension.
- [Look Fors](#): Complete simple and compound sentences using the frames provided, if necessary, should include relevant Tier 2 words.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students should be able to complete the activity mostly independently but may need clarification on some aspects of the assignments.
- [Look Fors](#): Compound/complex sentences should be mostly in students' own words and include more precise Tier 3 academic vocabulary and a greater level of detail.

Lesson 14: Responses to the Uyghur Crisis

Unless otherwise noted, Investigating History is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Activator: “Pomegranate Propaganda” Simile (10 minutes)

Slide 2: Show students a pomegranate. Ask them to describe the seeds and their relation to one another. (Alternatively, show students a pomegranate that you have already opened so the seeds are showing—follow the instructions on "[How to Cut a Pomegranate](#)" to do so without mess.)

Then, tell them you will share a description that uses figurative language, specifically a simile, to describe ethnic unity in Xinjiang.



BUILD LITERACY

If students have not studied similes and metaphors recently, share a basic definition, such as the one from *Grammarly*: "[Simile vs. Metaphor: What's the Difference?](#)."

Slide 3: Ask students:

What is he saying here, in figurative language?

Instruct students to Think-Pair-Share, to put this message in their own words. Then, check in with groups by having several share their versions. Follow up by questioning,

- *Does this image match what you have learned so far about Xinjiang?*
- *Do you believe it is a credible and accurate statement? Why/why not?*

Main insights:

(1) Tuniyazi and the Chinese government are promoting ethnic assimilation or “aliveness,” in which the culture is unified by requiring people to practice the same version of Chinese culture and not allowing people to express differences.

(2) Ethnic groups in Xinjiang, especially Uyghurs, generally do not feel this close unity, so the opinion expressed in this simile is not accurate or credible.



MAKE CONNECTIONS

Students might like to know that Human Rights Watch, a leading human rights organization, referred to his speech as “pomegranate propaganda” in the article "[Pomegranate Propaganda: A Chinese Government Official's UN Speech](#)" because he tried to make a harmful idea seem beautiful and cover up the tensions. As an extension, your class could discuss the reasons that propaganda is usually considered an untrustworthy or noncredible type of information.

Lesson 14: Responses to the Uyghur Crisis

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.



Investigating Sources: Thinking About Global Justice: How to Take Action for Minority Rights (20

minutes)

INTRODUCE PURPOSE AND PROCESS



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

As needed, support student understanding of key vocabulary:

- *Inclusive* means "open to and including everyone." *Inclusive* societies value the voices and contributions of all people.
- *Accountable* means "required to be responsible and to explain decisions." *Accountable* institutions, like government ministries, cannot just do things in secret. They have to answer to the public or those checking their work.

Students should add an image to represent these terms on **Vocabulary Support for Lessons 12–14**.

Slide 4: Introduce the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Today your class will be thinking together about how Uyghur people and other minority groups can gain greater equality and security wherever they live.

Remind students that they have worked with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in other social studies units in 6th and 7th grades. Distribute [SDG 16 and Global Response](#) to each student.

Slide 5: The UN Global Goal that strongly relates to ethnic minority rights is 16. Ask students:

- *What do you see?*
- *Is there a caption? What does it tell you?*
- *Who created it?*
- *Is this source helpful to our investigation? Why or why not?*

Ask students what the visual symbols mean or how they relate. If no one knows, introduce the symbols. (dove with olive branch=peace; judge's gavel=justice)

Read aloud some of the SDG 16 targets:

Lesson 14: Responses to the Uyghur Crisis

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

- Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms
- Promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice for all
- Develop effective, *accountable*, and *inclusive* institutions of government

Students will need help understanding these challenging concepts. After each one is read, pause and have volunteers identify the one or two most important words and/or paraphrase them to ensure comprehension.

Slide 6: Remind students that the United Nations created the Sustainable Development Goals and other important human rights declarations to be more than words on a paper. The SDGs aim to help people worldwide—individuals, communities, organizations, and nations—take action and make them real.

Provide students with the [SDG 16 and Global Response](#) handout. Tell students that they will work in groups to consider actions that people and groups have taken, and can take, to advocate for the rights of ethnic minority groups such as the Uyghurs.

OBSERVE THE DOCUMENT'S FEATURES

- What does this document show?
- What is the purpose of this document?
- Is this a source helpful to our investigation? Why or why not?

READ THE DOCUMENT

- Describe the types of action that have been taken in response to the Uyghur situation.

CONNECT TO OUR QUESTION

Discuss the following with your group and brainstorm responses:

- *In your view, which actions will have the biggest effect on protecting Uyghurs' safety and rights? Why?*



CULTURAL COMPETENCE

If your students ask about the effects of these actions, you can explain that, to date, sanctions and vocal outrage from around the world have had very little effect on China's policies in Xinjiang. China is a large, influential country: It has nuclear arms, the world's second-largest economy, and a veto on the UN Security Council. On the other hand, such actions have likely reached some Uyghur people in China and given them hope.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Use the [Observe Language and Literacy Builder](#) and [Connect Language and Literacy Builder](#) to assist and support MLs during the Investigating Sources routine.

Lesson 14: Responses to the Uyghur Crisis

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

- *What are some actions you and other students can take to help?*

Note: If necessary, this activity may be omitted to leave extra time for the final activity (below).



Putting it Together: Silk Road Legacy: Religious Tolerance (20 minutes)

Slide 7: Explain that for the rest of the class, students will return to the Cluster 3 Supporting Question and “put together” what they have learned about the legacy of religious tolerance on the Silk Road.

Slide 8: Present the Unit 3 Inquiry Chart the class created in Lesson 12.

SUMMARIZE OUR LEARNING AND SHARE OUR INITIAL THINKING

Ask: What did we do in Lessons 12–14?

Have students discuss in a Think-Pair-Share format and then call on a few students to share their responses with the whole group. Record their responses in the second column of the second row of the chart.

Some possible answers include:

- Read the Imperial Edict
- Watched videos about the Uyghur crisis
- Reviewed the UN Global Goal 16

Ask: What resources did we use in Lessons 12–14?

Possible responses:

- Videos, texts, images

Review the activities from the Cluster’s lessons in the “What did we do?” column. After reading each lesson’s summary, ask for students to turn and talk about what they learned in that lesson.

Slide 9: Explain that they will work in small groups to compare religious tolerance along the Silk Road with the modern-day Uyghur crisis. This activity will help them explain

Lesson 14: Responses to the Uyghur Crisis

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

how the Silk Road legacy of tolerance has changed and why these changes have occurred.

Direct students to the Comparison of Religious Tolerance section of their [SDG 16 and Global Response](#). Students should work together to fill in the chart by summarizing the key differences in Religious Diversity, Freedom of Worship, Role of the Government, Religious Education, and Cultural Exchange.

Using their knowledge, they will explain how each aspect of religious tolerance has changed and add that to the last column.

If there is time, have groups circulate to compare responses with another group to see if they had similar or different observations.

Slide 10: Debrief the activity by facilitating a short discussion using the questions below:

- *What were the biggest differences between the past and present?*
- *Why do you think religious tolerance has changed over time?*
- *How does religious freedom impact people's lives?*

SYNTHESIZE OUR IDEAS AND ANSWER THE SUPPORTING QUESTION

Ask students: *What did we learn that helps us answer our Supporting Question?*

Give students time to discuss in a Think-Pair-Share format. When student groups share with the whole class, record their responses on the Inquiry Chart. Guide them in supporting their assertions with specific evidence and examples. Ask probing questions to help students understand the cluster's key takeaways.

When student groups share with the whole class, record their responses in the "What did we learn?" column of the Inquiry Chart. Prompt students to record this information on their own handouts.

RETURN TO THE INQUIRY CHART

Slide 11: Finally, revisit the questions students added under the Supporting Question in Lesson 12 as part of their

Lesson 14: Responses to the Uyghur Crisis

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Launching the Question routine. Ask: *Have any of these questions been answered? Have any new questions come up?*

Give students a few minutes to share their thoughts and ideas with the group. Add student responses to the inquiry chart.

*SDG 16 and Global Response (Teacher Version)***Investigating Sources–UN Development Goal 16**

Observe	
What do you see?	Bird with a plant in its mouth, a gavel, a number, words
Is there a caption? What does it tell you?	Yes. It tells me that Sustainable Goal 16 is about Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
Who created this source?	The United Nations
Is this source helpful to our investigation? Why or why not?	Answers will vary. Students should explicitly explain why they have decided that the source is helpful or not.

Read	
What do the visual symbols mean? How do they relate to the goal?	Dove with olive branch=peace; Judge's gavel=justice. These symbols represent the focus of the goal.

Connect	
Explain the three targets in your own words.	Make sure everyone can get important information and speak freely. Make sure laws are fair and everyone is treated equally in court. Make sure governments are honest, include everyone, and do a good job helping people.

Global Responses to the Uyghur Situation

Directions: Read the items in the chart. These are true examples of actions that have been taken.

Actions Taken by Nations	Actions Taken by Groups	Actions Taken by Individuals
The United Nations human rights chief and other UN officials have demanded access to the Xinjiang internment camps and the freedom to speak with detainees. The US passed a law that American businesses working in Xinjiang must guarantee their activities do not contribute to any human rights violations in Xinjiang.	Human rights groups have called on nations to give safety (asylum) to Uyghurs who flee Xinjiang. In 2022, activists called for a boycott of the Winter Olympics in Beijing, China. They demanded that NBC cancel plans to broadcast the Olympics.	Uyghur individuals inside Xinjiang have smuggled out videos and photographs of Chinese mistreatment and passed them to outside newspapers and human rights groups. Uyghur people who have fled the country tell their stories on websites and social media.

Observe	
What does this chart show?	This chart shows different responses taken by nations, groups, and individuals in support of the Uyghur people.
What is the purpose of this chart?	To explain how different groups have responded to the Uyghur situation.
Is this chart helpful to our investigation? Why or why not?	Answers will vary. Students should explicitly explain why they have decided that the source is helpful or not.

Read

Describe the types of actions that have been taken in response to the Uyghur situation.

Different people and groups have taken action. Countries like the United States passed a law to stop companies from being involved in human rights abuses in Xinjiang. The United Nations asked to visit the camps and speak with detainees. Human rights groups have asked countries to give safety (asylum) to Uyghurs who escape. Activist groups called for a boycott of the Winter Olympics in China. Some Uyghur individuals risked their lives by sending videos and pictures out of the country to show what is happening. Others who fled tell their stories online to spread awareness.

Connect

Which of these actions will have the biggest effect in protecting Uyghur safety and rights? Why?

Answers will vary. Sample answer: Laws passed by governments, like the one in the United States, could have the biggest effect because they can pressure China by stopping business that supports the mistreatment. When countries speak out and take action, it shows the Chinese government that the world is watching. Also, giving asylum to Uyghurs who escape helps protect people right away.

What are some actions you and other students can take to help?

Answers will vary. Sample answer: Students can learn more about what is happening and talk about it with others. They can share stories on social media to spread awareness. They can write letters or sign petitions to ask leaders to take action. In school, they can do projects or presentations to teach classmates about the Uyghurs and why human rights matter.

Comparison of Religious Tolerance

Directions: Work together to complete the chart by summarizing what you learned about each topic for both periods. Discuss how religious tolerance has changed over time, and add that to the last column. Use specific sources from your cluster to support your answers.

Aspect	Silk Road	Uyghur crisis	How religious tolerance has changed over time
Religious Diversity - What religions were commonly practiced along the Silk Road? - How did different religious groups interact with each other? - What religions are practiced by the Uyghurs today? - How is religious diversity viewed in China today?	Multiple religions (Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism) coexisted and spread along trade routes.	Uighur Muslims face religious suppression, with restrictions on Islamic practices and forced assimilation.	Once a place of religious exchange, modern policies have moved toward state-enforced religious control.
Freedom of Worship - How freely could people practice their religion on the Silk Road? - Were there any major restrictions on religious practices? - What restrictions do Uyghur Muslims face today?	Travelers and locals could openly practice and share religious beliefs.	Mosques are being demolished, religious texts are banned, and open worship is monitored.	Governments historically encouraged religious exchange; today, religious expression is heavily policed.

Aspect	Silk Road	Uyghur crisis	How religious tolerance has changed over time
Role of the Government - How did different Silk Road empires treat religion? - Did rulers allow religious freedom, or did they enforce one dominant religion? - How does the Chinese government view and regulate religion today?	Empires generally allowed religious autonomy, as long as it did not threaten political stability.	The Chinese government enforces strict control over religious practices, labeling them as extremism.	Political shifts have led to increasing state control over religion.
Religious Education - How did people learn about religion along the Silk Road? - Were religious schools, temples, or monasteries important for spreading beliefs? - What opportunities do Uyghur Muslims have to learn about their religion today? - How has religious education changed over time?	Monasteries and temples educated travelers and local communities in different faiths.	Uighur children are often banned from learning Islam and are sent to state-run schools to promote atheism.	Religious education was once valued; now, it is restricted to eliminate cultural identity.

Aspect	Silk Road	Uyghur crisis	How religious tolerance has changed over time
Cultural Exchange - How did trade and travel along the Silk Road encourage religious exchange? - Were religious ideas shared through art, stories, or traditions? - What is happening to Uyghur religious and cultural traditions today? - Are Uyghur people allowed to express their religious identity freely? Why or why not?	Trade routes facilitated the blending of religious ideas, art, and traditions.	Uyghur culture and religion are being systematically suppressed through re-education camps and propaganda.	Cultural exchange has shifted to cultural erasure in an attempt to assimilate minority groups.

LESSON 15

Formative Assessment

EQ How does trade affect ideas and culture?

SQ What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to synthesize knowledge gained from analyzing sources and apply their understanding to answer the Cluster Supporting Question.

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE

Using evidence and reasoning, students will compare and contrast religious tolerance during the Silk Road and the current Uyghur crisis by creating a one-pager.

LESSON OVERVIEW

This Formative Assessment allows students to demonstrate their understanding of religious tolerance during the Silk Road era and the contrast with the current Uyghur crisis. Students will synthesize information from various sources (primary texts, artifacts, news articles, videos, etc.) and visually communicate their insights by creating a one-pager.

In this activity, students will use a structured planning chart to guide them through the process of designing a one-pager that compares the religious tolerance present during the Silk Road (7th–14th century) to the ongoing Uyghur crisis in the 21st century. This will help students reflect on historical and contemporary issues of religious freedom while encouraging them to engage critically with different sources of information.

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, RCA-H.6-8.1

See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS

- ☐ [Lesson 15 Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [Cluster 3 Formative Assessment Task](#)
- ☐ One-pager templates
- ☐ markers
- ☐ colored pencils
- ☐ blank paper
- ☐ Cluster 3 sources and handouts

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
Introduction	5
Formative Assessment	45

Lesson 15: Formative Assessment

Unless otherwise noted, Investigating History is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- [Cluster 3 Formative Assessment Task \(Graphic Organizer\)](#): Provides guidance and prompts for written response

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Encourage use of the sentence frames and sources provided in the Graphic Organizer. Consider providing an additional visual word bank, an example one-pager with information and images to show possible layout and organization, and allowing translation of instructions and sentence frames.
- Look Fors: One-pagers should be written in complete sentences using the frames provided and include relevant Tier 1 and 2 words. Students may use images as a way to demonstrate their knowledge.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- Pair students with a language-proficient peer if possible. Encourage use of the sentence frames and sources provided in the Graphic Organizer. Consider providing an additional word bank, an example one-pager with information and images to show possible layout and organization, and allowing translation of instructions and sentence frames if necessary.
- Look Fors: One-pagers should be written in complete simple and compound sentences using the frames provided and include relevant Tier 1 and 2 words. Students should include all requirements, but it may take them longer.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students should be able to complete this task mostly independently although they may need more time.
- Look Fors: One-pagers should be written in compound and complex sentences using more precise Tier 3 words and a greater level of detail. Students should write multiple sentences for each section, providing at least one relevant quote and visual.



ADVANCE PREPARATION

Select and make copies of at least three templates for students to create one-pagers. Ensure that students are able to access all handouts and student slide decks utilized during Cluster 3. The Know and Wonder chart should be posted so all students can access it.

Lesson 15: Formative Assessment

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Introduction (5 minutes)

Slide 2: Activate students' prior knowledge using the Know and Wonder Chart. Remind students of the Know and Wonder Chart they created as a class in Lesson 12.

Explain that they will use the Think-Pair-Share strategy to share their ideas with the class. Review a couple of responses under the "Know" section of the chart.

Ask students: *What could we move from the "Wonder" to the "Know" part of the chart? Which questions can we answer now?*

Explain that today, students will use what they have learned and the evidence from Cluster 3 sources to answer the Supporting Question.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Provide ML students with the [Cluster 3 Formative Assessment Task \(Graphic Organizer\)](#) for this activity which will support the construction of their written responses.

Support ML students by partnering them up to create the one-pager.

Lesson 15: Formative Assessment

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.



Formative Assessment (45 minutes)

Provide students with the [Cluster 3 Formative Assessment Task](#). Tell students that they will create a one-pager highlighting the contrast between the Silk Road's religious tolerance and the current situation of the Uyghur crisis.

Slide 3: Explain that a one-pager is a single page representing a topic's most important aspects. They will use this format to answer the Cluster 3 Supporting Question in the Formative Assessment Task.

Slide 4: Review the directions for the task, and explain that the one-pager should:

- Illustrate the contrast: Use visuals and symbols to show the differences.
- Be persuasive and visually engaging: Include maps, religious symbols, images of trade, or visuals to clarify your point.
- Have a message or slogan: Create a short, impactful statement. (e.g., "Tolerance Builds Bridges; Suppression Destroys Them.")
- Use evidence: Include factual information or quotes from the materials you used earlier.
- Include a call to action that explains how people can get involved.

Circulate to support collaboration and monitor. Offer constructive suggestions, such as improving clarity, enhancing visuals, or refining titles, by asking:

- *How does this image represent the legacy of religious tolerance on the Silk Road or the contrast of the current crisis?*
- *What message do you want your one-pager to send?*
- *Where can you add evidence to support your message?*
- *How can people take action?*

Lesson 15: Formative Assessment

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Cluster 3 Formative Assessment Task Rubric

Criteria	Exceeding Expectations (3)	Meeting Expectations (2)	Approaching Expectations (1)
Central Message/Title	Clear, focused message that highlights a powerful insight about change in religious freedom; title is engaging and meaningful	Message is clear and relevant to the topic; title relates to content	Message is somewhat unclear or lacks focus; title is vague or missing
Summary Comparison	Thoughtful, well-written comparison of Silk Road tolerance vs. Uyghur crisis with relevant context and accurate vocabulary	Accurate summary that compares past and present using basic evidence	Partial or unclear comparison; lacks historical accuracy or connection
Key Facts & Source Use	Includes 3+ accurate facts from multiple types of sources with clear explanations of significance	Includes 3 accurate facts with general connection to the main idea	Includes 1–2 facts with limited connection or missing context
Visuals (Images, Symbols, Border)	Thoughtful, creative visuals that enhance meaning and reflect Cluster 3 themes clearly	Visuals support the message and show some connection to Cluster 3	Visuals are unclear, incomplete, or not relevant to the content

Criteria	Exceeding Expectations (3)	Meeting Expectations (2)	Approaching Expectations (1)
Quotation from a Source	Well-chosen quote that directly supports the theme and is clearly introduced and cited	Quote is relevant and cited; supports message in a basic way	Quote is missing or unclear; limited connection to topic
Call to Action	Compelling call to action that encourages real-world reflection or awareness	Call to action is relevant and communicates a clear next step	Call to action is vague, unclear, or missing
Organization & Visual Appeal	Layout is clear, visually engaging, and enhances understanding	Layout is organized and easy to follow	Layout is messy, incomplete, or confusing
Language & Conventions	Writing is clear and free of errors; strong word choice and sentence variety	Minor errors that don't affect understanding; writing is mostly clear	Frequent errors interfere with understanding; writing needs support

LESSON 16

Unit Synthesis

EQ	How does trade affect ideas and culture?
SQ	What happened over time to the Silk Road legacy of tolerance?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE	LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE
Use the Know and Wonder Chart and Inquiry Charts to identify important takeaway learnings from each cluster of the unit.	Synthesize important takeaway learnings of the unit orally and in writing.

LESSON OVERVIEW

In the synthesis lesson, students reflect on what they have learned throughout the unit. They first revisit their Unit 3 Inquiry Charts to discuss and identify one big takeaway, question, and a helpful artifact per cluster. They then revisit the Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart. Students consider the Essential Question: *How does trade affect ideas and culture?* and discuss what questions from the Wonder column they can now answer. The lesson closes with an optional Content Assessment or flexible review time.

LESSON STANDARDS

PS 2, PS 5, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1, RCA-H.6-8.1
See full text of standards in the Cluster Overview.

MATERIALS
☐ Lesson 16 Slide Deck
☐ Unit Synthesis
☐ Silk Road Content Assessment (Teacher Version)
☐ Silk Road Content Assessment
☐ Silk Road Content Assessment (Sentence Frames)
☐ Unit 3 Clusters 1-3 Inquiry Charts
☐ Lesson 1: Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart

LESSON AT A GLANCE

Component	Time
Revisit the Unit’s Essential Question	20
Flexible Review or Assessment Time	30

Lesson 16: Unit Synthesis

Unless otherwise noted, Investigating History is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Plan for English Learner Success

The following scaffolds can support all students in achieving the lesson objectives:

- [Silk Road Content Assessment \(Sentence Frames\)](#): Provides guidance and prompts for written response
- [Summarize Language and Literacy Builder](#): Supports summaries of what students learned in the unit

The following strategies can help students at different proficiency levels achieve the lesson objectives:

English Proficiency Levels 1-2:

- Provide one or two simple sentence frames from the Summarize LLB for students to use in the unit synthesis discussion. Encourage students to refer to their handouts and work from the unit as they craft their ideas and responses.
- [Look Fors](#): Complete sentences using the frames provided should include Tier 1 and 2 words. Words may be copied from the questions or readings.

English Proficiency Levels 3-4:

- Have students choose sentence frames from the Summarize LLB to use in the unit synthesis discussion. Encourage students to refer to their handouts and work from the unit as they craft their ideas and responses.
- [Look Fors](#): Complete simple and compound sentences using the frames provided should include relevant Tier 1 and 2 words. Words may be copied from the questions or readings.

English Proficiency Levels 5-6:

- Students can choose more complex sentence frames from the Summarize LLB if necessary, and should be able to participate in the unit synthesis discussion.
- [Look Fors](#): Compound/complex sentences should include more precise Tier 2 and 3 academic vocabulary and a greater level of detail.

Lesson 16: Unit Synthesis

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

**ADVANCE PREPARATION**

Ensure that the Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart and the Inquiry Charts for Clusters 1–3 from each class period are easily accessible to students.

Set up three stations around the room—one per cluster. At each station:

- Display completed Inquiry Charts with student-generated questions and evidence.
- Include 2–3 key sources (images or excerpts from earlier lessons). Consider the following resources:
 - Cluster 1: Lesson 5 & 6 Student Slide Decks
 - Cluster 2: Character profiles or Interview Preparation sheet
 - Cluster 3: Edict of the Eighth month or Lesson 13 Student Slide Deck
- Create student groupings before the activity to ensure smoother transitions and the appropriate number of students at each station.

Revisit the Unit's Essential Question (20

minutes)

Slide 2: Review the unit's Essential Question. Explain that during this class, students will return to the Unit 3 Essential Question and work to answer this question in today's unit synthesis discussion and later in the unit's Summative Assessment Task.



How did trade affect ideas and culture?

Facilitate a reflection of what students have learned throughout the unit.

Slide 3: Provide students with [Unit Synthesis](#). Explain that today, students will revisit each cluster's Inquiry Chart to remember what we asked, explored, and learned. Review the handout directions, and introduce students to their first station. Inform students that they will have approximately 5 minutes at each station.

After students have visited each station, invite a couple of student groups to share their responses. Student responses for each cluster's takeaway should reflect Unit 3 Enduring Understandings. If student responses do not reflect the depth of the Enduring Understandings, prompt students to



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Prompt ML students to use their [Summarize Language and Literacy Builder](#) during this discussion to support their summaries of what they learned in the unit.

Lesson 16: Unit Synthesis

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

build on each other's thinking and guide the discussion to address the key information students should grasp.

Possible responses:

- Cluster 1: The geography and topography of regions affect how people travel and trade across distant regions.
- Cluster 2: Trade routes spread cultures and beliefs across regions and continents because economic exchange also leads to the sharing of religious beliefs, languages, art, and technologies.
- Cluster 3: Trade networks can promote openness and cultural exchange between societies, but they can also challenge policies about religious and ethnic diversity. Whether trade leads to acceptance of cultural differences or conflict and oppression often depends on how societies react during times of social change.

Slide 4: Remind students of the **Unit 3 Know and Wonder Chart** they created as a class in the Unit Kickoff. Ask students:

- *What could we move from the “Wonder” to the “Know” part of the chart?*

Invite volunteers to answer the questions using what they learned in the unit. Validate how much students have learned since the start of the unit!

Flexible Review or Assessment Time (30 minutes)

Use the rest of class time to wrap up the unit and/or begin the assessment. This may include:

- Extending the discussion from the first half of class to support a deeper and more complex synthesis of ideas around the Essential Question.
- Providing students with guided review time to organize their notes and begin preparing for the Summative Assessment.
- Administering a portion of the [Silk Road Content Assessment](#); please note that this is not sufficient time to administer the entire Content Assessment. If you have not used any portions of the Content Assessment



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

If you do have students work on the Content Assessment, provide ML students with the [Silk Road Content Assessment \(Sentence Frames\)](#) handout.

Lesson 16: Unit Synthesis

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

as supplemental Formative Assessments throughout the unit, either narrow the focus to certain sections or administer the entire 50-minute assessment on a separate day.

- Note: The [Silk Road Content Assessment \(Teacher Version\)](#) has scoring guidance for each section.

At the end of class, let students know that the next couple of classes will include a Summative Assessment of the unit.

Lesson 16: Unit Synthesis

Unless otherwise noted, *Investigating History* is © 2025 by DESE and licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.
For more information, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

Silk Road Content Assessment (Teacher Version)

Section 1: Geography

Use the map to support your responses to the following questions.



Silk Road in the First Century. Image by Babbage via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

1. Why did caravan routes often form a crescent shape north and south of the Taklamakan Desert?
 - a. Traders avoided Chinese territories to avoid taxation.
 - b. Major rivers flowed north and south through the desert.
 - c. **Cities and oasis towns formed around the edge of the desert, offering safety and resources.**
 - d. The northern part of the desert was frozen year-round.
2. What was a significant reason for developing multiple overland trade routes across Central Asia instead of a single path?
 - a. Merchants were banned from traveling in groups.
 - b. **Competing empires controlled different routes, and the terrain varied.**
 - c. Most traders preferred sea routes and rarely used land routes.
 - d. Monsoons made overland routes impassable in the summer months.

3. According to the map, which city likely served as a key trade hub at the crossroads of East and West?
- a. **Samarkand**
 - b. Dunhuang
 - c. Turfan
 - d. Chang'an
4. Which geographic feature made the maritime routes especially successful between East Africa and Southeast Asia?
- a. Forest routes connected to caravan paths inland
 - b. **Monsoon wind patterns and predictable sailing conditions**
 - c. Cold Arctic waters that helped preserve goods during shipping
 - d. Wide rivers that allowed boats to reach Central Asia

Map Analysis Question:

4. Based on the map, explain how geography affected the development of Silk Route trading centers. Your answer should include at least two geographic features and how they influenced trade.

Geography played a major role in where Silk Road trading centers developed. Many trade cities were located near oases or along rivers in otherwise harsh environments like the Taklamakan Desert or mountainous terrain in Central Asia. These geographic features provided water, rest, and resources, making them ideal stopping points for traders. In coastal areas, cities near natural harbors along the Indian Ocean became key maritime trade hubs. The placement of cities where routes converged also made them natural centers of exchange.

Section 2: Vocabulary

Circle the correct answer for each vocabulary definition that accurately answers the question.

6. **Which of the following best shows how the Silk Routes were an early example of globalization?**
- a. Traders only sold goods within their local city-states.
 - b. Empires closed their borders to protect cultural identity.
 - c. **Goods, ideas, and technologies moved between distant regions like China, Persia, and Rome.**
 - d. Cultural traditions stayed the same and never mixed across regions.

7. Which situation best reflects tolerance during Silk Route exchanges?
- a. A merchant is imprisoned for speaking a foreign language.
 - b. **A ruler allows people of many religions to live and trade peacefully in his city.**
 - c. A government forces everyone to follow the same faith.
 - d. An army destroys temples along a trade route to discourage outsiders.
8. Which of the following best describes cultural diffusion on the Silk Routes?
- a. One country forcing its culture on another through military conquest
 - b. New cultures form when civilizations are completely isolated
 - c. **Traders bringing their ideas and traditions into contact with others through exchange**
 - d. People abandoning their old beliefs to become merchants
9. What role did an oasis play in the success of overland trade?
- a. It was a military checkpoint that taxed travelers.
 - b. It was a religious temple where travelers could pray.
 - c. **It provided a resting place with water, food, and shelter in harsh terrain.**
 - d. It was where traders picked up their maritime cargo.
10. Which city was most likely a major hub along the Maritime Silk Routes?
- a. Samarkand
 - b. Chang'an
 - c. **Guangzhou**
 - d. Dunhuang

Section 3: Paragraph Answer

Answer the following question in a paragraph that has:

- **Claim:** a specific and accurate claim
- **Evidence:** two (2) pieces of evidence (from the artifact description and/or your background knowledge)
- **Reasoning:** clear reasoning for the claim

The sources below can help remind you of some important ideas about trade and the spread of Buddhism in China, but you can also use other information from the unit that you remember.

Artifact	Quote
 Asian Buddhist Monks. Image source unknown; from the book Chotscho by Albert von Le Coq via Wikimedia Commons is in the public domain. The figure on the right is a young Buddhist monk painted in a stereotypical East Asian style. He stands with downcast eyes, directed in reverence as he hears the teachings of the figure on the left. The figure on the left is painted in a style that is not East Asian in character. The two circles on either side of his chin are remarkably unusual (piercings?). He features a strongly set nose and clear blue eyes. His skin color is darker. His hair and beard color is reddish brown with brown shades. He stands looking at the younger monk, raising his hand in a teaching gesture as he speaks.	“...you must remember this is the 9th century, and what you get with this particular shipwreck is...this idea that... globalization is a very, very old concept and the sheer scale of the production that was involved in stocking the ship. You had porcelain that was drawn from different kilns in various parts of China, so there was a kind of commissioning (ordering) process. There was definitely a commercial network, or system, in which objects were commissioned and collected together in a pot and sent. So, it sort of portrayed very clearly that China was really a factory of the world at that time...that was supplying all these incredible goods in such amounts. You had porcelain that was made purely for export...and then you had incredible gold and silver...that reflected...a kind of hybrid influence in the stylistics. One of the largest objects, really, one of the masterpieces of ceramics found on this (shipwreck), is a ewer (a large water jug) with a dragon head cover. The design...of that piece is modeled after West Asian metalware, so you see already in the...form and the style and the choice of color a kind of mixing...between the taste and aesthetics of different cultures, and it really just speaks to the intensity of contact between West Asia and China.”  Ewer with Dragon Head Cover Image by Marcin Konsek via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

11. How do the artifact and the quote illustrate China's role in trade and cultural exchange along the Silk Road?

Trade along the Silk Routes helped spread ideas and inspire innovation between different cultures. In the fresco from the Bezeklik Caves, a Central Asian monk is shown teaching an East Asian monk, showing that trade routes didn't just move goods—they moved people and knowledge. The shipwreck quote also explains how Chinese porcelain was commissioned and made specifically for other cultures, and how a water jug found on the ship was styled after West Asian metalwork.

These examples show that trade was a two-way exchange. People from different cultures taught each other and influenced the things they made. The hybrid designs and international production described in the shipwreck show that trade inspired new styles that blended East Asian and Western tastes. These sources help us understand that globalization and cultural mixing were happening through trade even in the 9th century.

Section 4: Applied Historical Inquiry

Read the following scenario and the quote by Xuanzang about traveling along the Silk Road. Then answer the questions below.

Scenario: Today, major airports like Dubai, Singapore, and Istanbul connect travelers from all over the world. People pass through these hubs daily, speaking many languages, practicing different religions, and exchanging cultural practices—even briefly—while in transit.

Travel Journal of Xuanzang (645 CE)

"In the deserts of Central Asia, there were towns where people of many faiths gathered. I saw Buddhist monks, Zoroastrian fire temples, and Christian travelers from the West. Markets were full of spices and silks. Along the way, I received shelter in oasis towns, where people spoke many languages and welcomed strangers with warmth."

Text source: Tom Nagorski and Boon Hui Tan, "[The Inside Story of a Ship That Broke Global Trade](#)," Bloomberg Originals, September 21, 2021, YouTube video.

12. Based on this quote and your learning from the unit, how is Xuanzang's description of the Silk Road similar to modern global travel?

Xuanzang describes seeing people of many faiths, hearing different languages, and encountering bustling markets, similar to what we see today in international airports or global cities. Like the Silk Road, modern travel involves cultural exchange, diverse populations, and people sharing goods, beliefs, and ideas. Both then and now, travel is a way for the world to stay connected and for cultures to interact peacefully.

13. Why might religious and cultural tolerance have been important for trade, both then and now?

Religious and cultural tolerance allowed traders from different backgrounds to work and travel safely. In the past, Silk Route cities were successful partly because people of different faiths (Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, etc.) could coexist. Without tolerance, trade would be risky or limited. Today, global trade and tourism still rely on respect for other cultures to create peaceful interactions and partnerships.

14. What role did cities and rest stops (oasis towns or modern airports) play in helping trade and cultural exchange happen?

Cities and rest stops gave traders a place to rest, buy and sell goods, and interact with people from other regions. On the Silk Roads, oasis towns offered food, water, and shelter, which made long-distance trade possible. These places were also where ideas were exchanged. Traders met people from other cultures and shared stories, religions, and technologies. Today, airports play a similar role by connecting travelers, enabling exchange, and serving as cultural crossroads.

Scoring Guidance

Section 1: Geography (11 points)

- 2 points per correct response to multiple-choice questions
- 3 points for a map analysis response that:
 - Correctly identifies two distinct geographic features
 - Explains how each feature influenced trade
 - Utilizes clear and accurate reasoning to connect the geography to the development of trade centers along the Silk Routes.

Section 2: Vocabulary (10 points)

- 2 points per correct response to multiple-choice questions

Section 3: Paragraph Answer (10 points)

- 3 points for a claim that clearly and directly answers the questions with a specific, accurate statement about China's role in trade and cultural exchange
- 4 points for a response that cites two pieces of accurate evidence from the artifact description or the student's background knowledge
- 3 points for a response that fully and accurately explains how the evidence supports the claim, showing the connection between China's trade goods, cultural blending, and its role in the Silk Road networks

Section 4: Applied Inquiry (9 points)

- 3 points for each quote analysis that makes a clear connection between the Silk Road and its impact on modern trade and cultural exchange

Total possible: 40 points

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

The Silk Routes: Trade and Cultural Exchange Across Asia

ASSESSMENT PACING

Lesson 17

Task 1 and 2

Assessment Overview

The Summative Assessment for Unit 7.3 provides students with the opportunity to showcase the knowledge and skills they have developed throughout the unit. Students will engage in structured activities that guide them toward crafting a well-supported written response to the Unit Essential Question:

How does trade affect ideas and culture?

Students will begin with a collaborative Discussion Diamond activity, where they will generate and organize possible responses to the Essential Question using evidence from the unit. They will then individually compose a two-paragraph written argument utilizing unit sources and explaining how those sources support their claim. By engaging in collaborative discussions and evidence-based writing, students will demonstrate their understanding of the ways in which trade influences cultural exchange and the spread of ideas.

Assessment at a Glance

- **Task 1:** Students work in groups of 4 to complete the Discussion Diamond activity, where they individually respond to the Unit Essential Question using evidence from unit sources. They then share their responses within their group and collaboratively identify the strongest supporting evidence to record in the center of the Discussion Diamond.
- **Task 2:** Students use their Discussion Diamond and unit sources to independently write a two-paragraph argument answering the Unit Essential Question. Their response should include a clear claim, supporting evidence, and an explanation of how trade affects ideas and culture.

Advanced Preparation

Recreate the Discussion Diamond template on chart paper to show students what information they should add to each section. If possible, give students access to the digital version of the Discussion Diamond template so that they can all respond simultaneously. This will require computers for all students.

Assessment Focus Standards

Practice Standards: PS 2, PS 5

Content Standards: 7.T1a.1, 7.T1b.2g, 7.T2a.1, 7.T2a.3, 7.T2b.2e, 7.T2b.2f, 7.T2c.1

Literacy Standards: RCA-H.6-8.1, RCA-H.6-8.2, SLCA.6-8.1, WCA.6-8.1, WCA.6-8.9

Grading and Providing Feedback

Task 1

Look and listen for the citation of specific information and evidence from the unit in students' written and oral responses during the Discussion Diamond activity.

Task 2

Use the [Silk Routes Rubric](#) to evaluate students' work.

LESSON 17

Summative Assessment, Day 1

Teacher Notes

In this lesson, students will complete the Unit 3 Summative Assessment. The assessment task asks students to use their knowledge from the unit to answer the Unit Essential Question: *How do goods and ideas affect trade?* First, students will engage in a Discussion Diamond activity to identify possible responses to the Unit Essential Question. Next, they will write a two-paragraph claim that answers the question from their perspective. Students will use evidence from unit sources and explain how they were helpful in answering the Unit Essential Question.

Advanced Preparation:

Recreate the Discussion Diamond template on chart paper to show students what information they should add to each section. If possible, give students access to the digital version of the Discussion Diamond template so that they can all respond simultaneously. This will require computers for all students.

MATERIALS

- ☐ [Summative Lesson Slide Deck](#)
- ☐ [Summative Assessment Task](#)
- ☐ [Summative Discussion Diamond](#)
- ☐ [Silk Routes Rubric](#)
- ☐ [Summative Assessment Task \(Sentence Stems\)](#)

Review the Know and Wonder Chart (5 minutes)

Slide 2: Give students time to review the Know and Wonder Chart from the Unit Kickoff. Then ask students:

- *What questions in the Wonder column can we now answer?*

Have a few students share their ideas and answers.

Ask students:

- *What else do we know about the goods, ideas, or cultural practices exchanged along the Silk Routes?*
- *How did trade influence people's lives or beliefs?*

Allow students to Think-Pair-Share and record new learnings on the Know section of the chart. Then remind students of

the Unit 3 Essential Question: *How does trade affect ideas and culture?*

Inform students that they will be working to answer this question in the Summative Assessment Task.

Discussion Diamond (15 minutes)

Slide 3: Form groups of 4 students. Provide each group with the [Summative Discussion Diamond](#), and ensure they can access the Cluster 1–3 handouts and student slide decks.



TEACHING TIP

The Discussion Diamond template can be printed or used digitally. If using digitally, share the slide deck, and create a slide for each group. Alternatively, you can recreate the chart on chart paper for each group so that students can write simultaneously.

Slide 4: Ask each student to write down their response to the Essential Question independently:

- *How does trade affect ideas and culture?*

Students should use an artifact, map, or other source to support their answer and explain why they chose that source. Each student shares their answers and ideas with the group.

Slide 5: As a group, students discuss all of the answers and evidence from the sources they selected (e.g., primary documents, maps, and articles) as a group. They should record their consensus and best evidence in the center of the diamond.

Summative Assessment Task (30 minutes)

Distribute the [Silk Routes Rubric](#), and explain that this tool will help them as they work on the individual writing task.

Guide students through the rubric, and give them time to ask questions as needed.

Slide 6: Then direct students to begin the [Summative Assessment Task](#). Students individually write their responses to the Essential Question using their Discussion Diamond as a guide.

Monitor students' progress, offer guidance, and clarify any questions.

When 5 minutes remain in the period, give students a warning. Students may complete their responses during the next class period if time permits.



SUPPORT ALL STUDENTS

Provide ML students with the [Summative Assessment Task \(Sentence Stems\)](#) in order to complete the Summative Assessment.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Summative Assessment Task (Sentence Stems)

Directions: Use the information from your Discussion Diamond and knowledge of the Silk Routes to write an argument about how trade affects ideas and culture.

Introduction Start with a sentence that answers the question.	Add a sentence about why the Silk Routes are an important example. <i>Trade affects ideas and culture by...</i>
Body Paragraph 1 Explain how goods traded on the Silk Routes affected culture.	Use these sentence starters: <i>One way trade affected culture was by...</i> <i>For example, the map shows that...</i> <i>This map was helpful to my point because...</i>
Body Paragraph 2 Explain how ideas (like religions) spread through trade.	Use these sentence starters: <i>Trade also spreads ideas, such as...</i> <i>The artifact shows that...</i> <i>This artifact was helpful to my point because...</i>
Conclusion Summarize your main points.	Use these sentence starters: <i>In conclusion, trade affects ideas and culture by...</i> <i>This is historically significant because...</i>

Name: _____ Date: _____

Summative Discussion Diamond

1. Write your answer to the Unit Essential Question on your corner of the Discussion Diamond.
 - Support your answer with an artifact, map, or other source from the unit.
 - Explain why you chose that source and how it helps you answer the question.
2. As a group, discuss all of the answers and evidence.
3. Select the best answer and evidence, and write it in the center of the Diamond.

A diamond-shaped graphic organizer with four vertices. Each vertex has a label 'Name:' and a label 'Date:'. Four lines extend from each vertex towards the corners of the page.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Summative Assessment Task

Directions: Use the sources, information from your Discussion Diamond, and knowledge of the Silk Routes to write an argument about how trade affects ideas and culture.

Introduction (one paragraph): Restate the question, and provide a thesis/claim statement.	
Body Paragraph 1 Use specific evidence from the sources to support your claim. Explain how goods exchanged on the Silk Routes impacted daily life or culture.	
Transition Sentence	

Body Paragraph 2 Use specific evidence from the sources to support your claim. Explain how ideas or beliefs spread and influenced societies through trade.	
Transition Sentence	
Conclusion (one paragraph): Summarize your main points. Explain why understanding trade's impact is important in history.	

Checklist before submitting:

- Did I answer the question in my introduction?
- Did I include examples from at least two sources?
- Did I explain how trade spreads ideas or culture?
- Did I check my spelling and grammar?

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES



Grade 7, Unit 3: The Silk Routes

Resources for Educators

As you prepare to teach this unit, we encourage you to deepen your own understanding of the content you will be covering with students. Throughout the lesson plans, sidebars highlight opportunities for you to learn more about various topics and historical events being covered, including links to a wide range of external resources. This document provides a complete list of these linked resources and a brief description of each to support your continued learning.

Cluster 1: Traveling the Silk Routes

Author	Resource	Use
Lesson 1		
DESE	<u>Background Brief: The Silk Routes</u>	The Background Brief was designed to support educators in developing content knowledge before teaching this unit.
Lesson 2		
Qiu, Jane	<u>Archaeologists Uncover Another Branch of the Silk Road</u>	Brief article about a recently identified branch of the Silk Road through Tibet
Lesson 3		
Waugh, Daniel C.	<u>The Silk Roads and Eurasian Geography</u>	Article and photo gallery about Eurasian geography and climate
Salopek, Paul	<u>On Foot in the Path of the Silk Road</u>	StoryMap from the creator of the Out of Eden Walk that shows historical connections to present-day Silk Road countries
Getty Research Institute	<u>Cave Temples of Dunhuang: Buddhist Art on China's Silk Road</u>	Exhibition about the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, including a slideshow of art and a virtual immersive experience
Lesson 4		

Reid, Struan	<u>What Are the Spice Routes?</u>	Chapter from the book Exploration by Sea about the Spice Routes (an alternative name for the sea routes)
UNESCO	<u>About the Silk Roads</u>	Introductory web page for the Silk Roads Programme, which hosts a variety of resources
UNESCO	<u>Quanzhou</u>	Introductory web page for the Silk Roads Programme, which hosts a variety of resources
Lesson 8		
Hansen, Valerie	<u>The Legacy of the Silk Road</u>	Article about the cultural exchange of ideas, technologies, and even mindsets that arose from contact along the Silk Road
Hansen, Valerie	<u>Silk Road</u>	Article with accompanying videos that gives an overview of the history of the Silk Road, including trade, migration, religion, and law
Kurin, Richard	<u>The Silk Road: Connecting People and Cultures</u>	Article from the Smithsonian Folklife Festival program book about the cultivation and spread of silk along the Silk Road

Cluster 3: The Silk Road Legacy

Author	Resource	Use
Lesson 13		
Chen, Heather	<u>Chinese Dissident Artist Ai Weiwei On Masks, Uyghurs and Democracy</u>	Interview with Ai Weiwei about his denouncement of Uyghur policy
Wikipedia	<u>Uyghur Khaganate</u>	Encyclopedia entry about the large northern Uyghur empire
Coiro, Julie	<u>Teaching Adolescents How to Evaluate the Quality of Online Information</u>	Pedagogical resource with strategies to help students identify relevance, accuracy, bias, and reliability in online media
Schulten, Katherine and Christy Brown, Amanda	<u>Evaluating Sources in a “Post-Truth” World</u>	Pedagogical resource on news media literacy and assessing credibility

Ithaca College	<u>Project Look Sharp</u>	Website with pedagogical resources to support media literacy education
The Freedom Forum	<u>NewseumED</u>	Website with pedagogical resources to support First Amendment and media literacy education
Lesson 14		
Yamasaki, Parker	<u>Simile vs. Metaphor: What's the Difference?</u>	Blog post with basic definitions and examples of similes and metaphors
Human Rights Watch	<u>Pomegranate Propaganda: A Chinese Government Official's UN Speech</u>	Article analyzing Aierken Tuniyazi's 2019 UN speech