



# SECRETS OF THE SILK ROAD

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HIGH SCHOOL  
LESSON PLANS

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**Penn Museum**  
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA MUSEUM  
of ARCHAEOLOGY and ANTHROPOLOGY

3260 South Street / Philadelphia, PA  
[www.penn.museum](http://www.penn.museum)

Refer to the *Secrets of the Silk Road* Educators' Guide ([www.penn.museum/silkroad](http://www.penn.museum/silkroad)) for exhibition content and associated student activity worksheets.

## UNIT ONE

### THE SILK ROAD – CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

#### Pre-Visit Activity

##### Mapping the Silk Road

#### STANDARDS

<b>Geography:</b>	The World in Spatial Terms; Places and Regions; Human Systems; The Uses of Geography
<b>World History:</b>	Era 3: Classical Traditions, Major Religions, and Giant Empires, 1000 BCE–300 CE; Era 4: Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter, 300–1000 CE

#### OBJECTIVE

Students will chart the migration of Silk Road trade products through research and map making.

#### SUGGESTED TIME

50 minutes: 20 minutes discussion time and 30 minutes computer lab time. If a computer lab is not available, 20 minutes discussion time plus evening homework.

#### PROJECT NEEDS

- ✘ In-class computer lab time
- ✘ Textbook
- ✘ Pre-understanding of the Silk Road
- ✘ Overhead projector (or class Smart Board)
- ✘ Overhead transparency (or projected image of map onto Smart Board) made from the Eurasia physical map by the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, found online at [http://www.classzone.com/cz/books/wh\\_survey05/get\\_chapter\\_group.htm?cin=1&rg=map\\_center&at=outline\\_maps&var=outline\\_maps](http://www.classzone.com/cz/books/wh_survey05/get_chapter_group.htm?cin=1&rg=map_center&at=outline_maps&var=outline_maps)

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Students will discuss what they know about the Silk Road. Sample discussion prompts include:
  - a. What was the purpose of the Silk Road?
  - b. Where did the Silk Road go?
  - c. What items were traded along the Silk Road?
2. As a class, students will generate a list of products that were traded along the Silk Road: silk, paper, porcelain, spices, tapestries and carpets, perfume, tea, gold and silver, ivory, paper, horses, furs, jade, etc.
3. Students will break into small groups. Each group will be assigned a product or products to research.
4. Each group will be responsible for researching the following information in their textbooks and online about their product(s):
  - a. Region of origin of their product(s)
  - b. Where the product(s) would have traveled along the Silk Road
5. Students will present their findings to the class.
6. As a class, students will mark the origins of each product as “point A” and the destinations as “point B” of each product on the overhead transparency/Smart Board. Students will then draw an arrow(s) connecting their points.



# UNIT ONE

## THE SILK ROAD – CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### POST-VISIT ACTIVITY

#### Silk Road Exports Today

#### STANDARDS

- Economics:** Gain from Trade; Specialization and Trade
- World History:** Era 3: Classical Traditions, Major Religions, and Giant Empires, 1000 BCE–300 CE; Era 4: Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter, 300–1000 CE; Era 9: The 20th Century since 1945: Promises and Paradoxes

#### OBJECTIVE

Students will research the major exports of regions of the world from the time period of the Silk Road, and compare and contrast the major exports of these regions today.

#### SUGGESTED TIME

50 minutes: 20 minutes discussion time and 30 minutes computer lab time. If a computer lab is not available, 20 minutes discussion time plus evening homework.

#### PROJECT NEEDS

- ✘ Silk Road routes map, located in the *Secrets of the Silk Road* Educators' Guide. This map, as well as an interactive Silk Road routes map, is also found online at <http://www.penn.museum/silkroad>
- ✘ Completed transparency or image from the *Mapping the Silk Road* activity
- ✘ In-class computer time
- ✘ Classroom textbook

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Students will examine the Silk Road routes map and discuss the regions linked by the Silk Road.
2. Students will define the terms *export* and *commodity*.
3. Students will make a list on the board of objects traded along the Silk Road. Of the listed objects, students will recall the ones seen in the *Secrets of the Silk Road* exhibition.
4. Students will recall the country or region of origin of the products, as discovered in the *Mapping the Silk Road* activity.
5. Students will be divided into small groups. Each group will select a country or region involved in Silk Road trade.
6. Students will research the top three exports of the region during the Silk Road.
7. Students will research the top three exports of the region today.
8. Students will share their findings with the class. Discussion points can include:
  - a. How might the exports of today travel?
  - b. Are there any similarities between the exports of today and at the time of the Silk Road?
  - c. How do the major exports of today reflect contemporary technology? How is this technology different than at the time of the Silk Road?
  - d. How do the major exports of today reflect on our contemporary views of commodity items? How are these commodities the same or different at the time of the Silk Road?

# UNIT TWO

## TARIM BASIN – CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY

**Silk Road Routes:** Getting from Point A to Point B

### STANDARDS

**Geography:** The World in Spatial Terms; Places and Regions; Physical Systems; Human Systems; The Uses of Geography; Environment and Society

### OBJECTIVE

After discovering the Silk Road trade goods, students will explore the geographical limitations of the trade routes along the Silk Road. They will discover the Tarim Basin as the crossroads of the route.

### SUGGESTED TIME

50 minutes

### PROJECT NEEDS

- ✘ Completed overhead transparency of Eurasia physical map from the *Mapping the Silk Road* activity
- ✘ Tarim Basin geography map, located in the *Secrets of the Silk Road* Educators' Guide. Found online at: <http://www.penn.museum/silkroad>
- ✘ Overhead transparency made of the Silk Road routes map, located in the *Secrets of the Silk Road* Educators' Guide. An interactive map is also found online at <http://www.penn.museum/silkroad>
- ✘ Eurasia physical map, one per student, printed online from the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company: [http://www.classzone.com/cz/books/wh\\_survey05/get\\_chapter\\_group.htm?cin=1&rg=map\\_center&at=outline\\_maps&var=outline\\_maps](http://www.classzone.com/cz/books/wh_survey05/get_chapter_group.htm?cin=1&rg=map_center&at=outline_maps&var=outline_maps)

### DIRECTIONS

1. Students will examine the overhead transparency from the *Introducing and Mapping the Silk Road* activity.
2. Students will examine the geographical map of the Silk Road region.
3. Students will decide as a class whether or not the trade routes they created on the transparency would be feasible for travelers. The class will discuss the following factors which would affect Silk Road traders:
  - a. Climate
  - b. Access to food and water
  - c. Places for travelers to rest
  - d. Mountains, rivers, deserts, and other geographical features which might be difficult to traverse
  - e. Directness of route vs. getting around obstacles
  - f. Places for traders to buy and sell their wares
4. As a class, students will discuss the geographical features in the Tarim Basin, such as the mountains to the north and the south, the Taklamakan desert, the rivers and the oases, as well as the location of towns and settlements.
5. Based on the discussion, each student will remap the routes on the Silk Road-region geography map handout.
6. Students will examine the transparency, which shows the actual routes of the Silk Road.
7. Students will discuss how their guesses compare to the actual routes and talk about why the route takes the shape it does.
8. Students will create a legend for their maps, assigning a color to each geographical feature.  
Features to consider include:
  - a. Desert
  - b. Oases
  - c. Rivers
  - d. Mountain ranges
9. Students will color the geographical features on their map.
10. Students will discuss why the Tarim Basin might be a particularly interesting area of the Silk Road for archaeologists to study. They might think about:
  - a. The fact that it is right in the middle of the Silk Road
  - b. The people, objects, and influences entering the area from east and west

# UNIT TWO

## TARIM BASIN – CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### POST-VISIT ACTIVITY

#### Tarim Basin Weather Forecast

#### STANDARDS

**Geography:** Places and Regions; Physical Systems; Human Systems; The Uses of Geography; Environment and Society

**Science:** Earth and Space Science; Science and Technology

#### OBJECTIVE

After discussing the geography and the climate of the Tarim Basin, students will create a weather forecast using PowerPoint.

#### SUGGESTED TIME

50 minutes

#### PROJECT NEEDS

- ✘ In-class computer time
- ✘ PowerPoint
- ✘ Smart board or projector linked to the Internet
- ✘ Tarim Basin geography map, located in the *Secrets of the Silk Road* Educators' Guide. Found online at: <http://www.penn.museum/silkroad>
- ✘ Daily life objects from the Tarim Basin, as discovered in the *Secrets of the Silk Road* exhibition. Found online at: <http://www.penn.museum/silkroad>

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Students will discuss the daily life objects excavated from the Tarim Basin, as viewed in the *Secrets of the Silk Road* exhibition.
2. Students will discuss what the objects tell one about the climate and lifestyle of the Tarim Basin people.  
Discussion points to consider may include:
  - a. Clothing: What types of fibers were the mummies buried with? What type of weather were they dressed for at the time of their death?
  - b. Daily Life Objects: Since the mummies were pastoral nomads, how might the weather have impacted their lives?
3. Students will discuss the geographical features of the Tarim Basin, including the mountains to the north and the south, the Taklamakan desert, the rivers, and the oases.
4. Students will discuss the climate of the Tarim Basin as a result of the geographical features.
5. Students will imagine that they are weather forecasters and their audience is pastoral nomads of the Tarim Basin, 1000 BCE.
6. Students will research images online to create a PowerPoint weather forecast. Presentation points to consider include:
  - a. The names of the geographical features of the Tarim Basin region.
  - b. How the weather and geographical features will impact the working conditions of the pastoral nomads.
7. Students will share their PowerPoint with the class.

# UNIT THREE

## DAILY LIFE – CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY

#### Pastoral Nomads Today

### STANDARDS

**World History:** Era 2: Early Civilizations and the Emergence of Pastoral Peoples, 4000–1000 BCE

### OBJECTIVE

Students will research pastoral nomadic cultures of today and map each culture's characteristics in a web diagram.

### SUGGESTED TIME

50 minutes: 20 minute discussion time and 30 minute computer lab time. If a computer lab is not available, 20 minutes discussion time plus evening homework.

### PROJECT NEEDS

- ✘ In class computer time
- ✘ Classroom textbook

### DIRECTIONS

1. Students will discuss the following:
  - a. What is a pastoral nomad?
  - b. How would we describe the lifestyle of a pastoral nomad of Xinjiang?
  - c. Do pastoral nomads still exist today? Where in the world do these cultures live?
2. Students will discuss the lives of nomads. The following aspects will be considered:
  - a. Clothing
  - b. Dwellings
  - c. Personal possessions
3. As a class, students will write a list of the pros and cons of being a nomad. Students can consider the following factors:
  - a. Physical security
  - b. Food and water: access and variety of diet
  - c. Freedom and self-sufficiency
4. On the computer and with their textbooks, students will research present-day pastoral nomadic cultures.
5. Students will create a web diagram to list the characteristics of present-day pastoral nomadic cultures. The center circle will be labeled as "Pastoral Nomads." The circles extending from the center circle will be labeled as the various nomadic cultures.
6. As a class, students will discuss the similarities and differences they discovered about present-day pastoral nomadic cultures.

# UNIT THREE

## DAILY LIFE – CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

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### POST-VISIT ACTIVITY

#### You Can't Take It with You

#### STANDARDS

World History: Era 2: Early Civilizations and the Emergence of Pastoral Peoples, 4000-1000 BCE

#### OBJECTIVE

Students will personify themselves as pastoral nomads.

#### SUGGESTED TIME

50 minutes

#### PROJECT NEEDS

✂ Images of everyday life items of pastoral nomads, as discovered in the *Secrets of the Silk Road* exhibition. Found online at [penn.museum/silkroad](http://penn.museum/silkroad)

#### DIRECTIONS

1. As a class, students will reflect about the daily pastoral life objects they observed in the exhibition.
2. Students will review images of everyday life objects belonging to pastoral nomads.
3. Students will imagine themselves as pastoral nomads of the Tarim Basin, 1000 BCE.
4. Each student will make a list of ten items they would carry with them if they were a pastoral nomad.
5. Students will compare their lists as a class. Where any similarities discovered?



# UNIT FOUR

## SACRED AND SPIRITUAL LIFE – CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY

Mapping World Religions

#### STANDARDS

**Geography:** The World in Spatial Terms; Places and Regions; Human Systems; The Uses of Geography  
**World History:** Era 4: Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter, 300–1000 CE; Era 9: The 20th Century Since 1945: Promises and Paradoxes

#### OBJECTIVE

Students will research religions that traveled the Silk Road.

#### SUGGESTED TIME

2–50 minute class periods or one evening of homework plus 30 minutes class time

#### PROJECT NEEDS

- ✘ Reserved time in the school's computer lab (if in-class activity)
- ✘ Classroom textbook
- ✘ 8 pieces of poster board
- ✘ Markers or crayons
- ✘ Physical World Map, one per student, printed online from the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company:  
[http://www.classzone.com/cz/books/wh\\_survey05/get\\_chapter\\_group.htm?cin=1&rg=map\\_center&at=outline\\_maps&var=outline\\_maps](http://www.classzone.com/cz/books/wh_survey05/get_chapter_group.htm?cin=1&rg=map_center&at=outline_maps&var=outline_maps)

#### DIRECTIONS

##### Day One:

Students will research the below questions on the Internet and in their textbooks for approximately 50 minutes (if in-class activity.)

1. Students will discuss the religions that they know about. Some discussion points to consider:
  - a. What do the people who practice each religion believe in?
  - b. Where did each religion originate?
  - c. Did each religion travel the Silk Road?
2. Students will be assigned into small groups for a total of eight groups. Each group will be assigned one of the following religions to research:
  - a. Zoroastrianism
  - b. Buddhism
  - c. Confucianism
  - d. Taoism
  - e. Manichaeism
  - f. Nestorian Christianity
  - g. Judaism
  - h. Islam
3. For each religion, each group will answer the following questions:
  - a. What are the major tenets of the religion?
  - b. What are some images/symbols associated with the religion?
  - c. Where did the religion originate?
  - d. What percentage of the world's population practices this religion today?
  - e. Is the practice of this religion concentrated in a particular region of the world? Where?

##### Day Two:

1. Each group will create a poster board illustration of their religion.
2. Each group will receive a copy of a world map.
3. Each group will create a legend, assigning colors to their religion's country/region of origin and their religion's present-day concentration of practitioners.



# UNIT FOUR

## SACRED AND SPIRITUAL LIFE – CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- Each group will map out their religion's country/region of origin and the area(s) of concentration of their religion.
- Each group will share their religion, poster, and map with the class.
- Students will discuss the following questions as a class:
  - Do the areas of concentration for each religion correspond to each religion's birthplace?
  - Which religions moved from their birthplace and concentrated in another area of the world today?

### POST-VISIT ACTIVITY

#### Burial Collage

#### STANDARDS

- Visual Arts:** Understanding and Applying Media; Choosing and Evaluating a Range of Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas
- World History:** Era 2: Early Civilizations and the Emergence of Pastoral Peoples, 4000–1000 BCE; Era 3: Classical Traditions, Major Religions, and Giant Empires, 1000 BCE–300 CE

#### OBJECTIVE

As a class, students will reflect about the burial items and burial practices they witnessed in the *Secrets of the Silk Road* exhibition. Students will map the similarities and differences in Venn diagrams.

#### SUGGESTED TIME

50 minutes

#### PROJECT NEEDS

- ✘ Images of Egyptian burial sites and tomb goods
- ✘ Glue sticks
- ✘ Magazines (or classroom computer lab time)
- ✘ Images from the *Secrets of the Silk Road* exhibition found online at <http://www.penn.museum/silkroad>
- ✘ Poster board
- ✘ Scissors

#### DIRECTIONS

- Students will discuss their knowledge of various cultural beliefs in the afterlife.
- Students will discuss their knowledge of tomb goods associated with the ancient Egyptians and will write a list of these objects on the board.
- Students will review sample images of tomb goods associated with ancient Egyptians and compare these with the list on the board.
- Students will discuss the following questions as a class:
  - What types of tomb goods from the Tarim Basin's inhabitants did we observe in the *Secrets of the Silk Road* exhibition?
  - Were any similarities between the Tarim Basin tomb goods and the ancient Egyptian tomb goods observed? Any differences?
  - Were any similarities between the Tarim Basin inhabitants' burial practices and the ancient Egyptian's burial practices observed? Any differences?
- Students will receive a piece of poster board, magazines, and other art materials.
- Students will create a collage of objects they would choose to accompany them into the afterlife. If a computer lab activity, students can locate images online and create a Word document of images.
- Students will examine images of burial objects from the *Secrets of the Silk Road* exhibition.
- Students will examine their burial collage.
- Students will record similarities and differences between the objects in their collage and the objects in the *Secrets of the Silk Road* exhibition on a Venn diagram.

# UNIT FIVE

## RELEVANCE – CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY

#### Global Trade Today

### STANDARDS

**Mathematics:** Statistics & Probability: Conditional Probability & the Rules of Probability

### OBJECTIVE

Students will examine global trade today by examining the objects in their bedroom and reporting statistical data of their finds.

### SUGGESTED TIME

One evening homework assignment plus 20 minute class discussion.

### DIRECTIONS

#### *At home:*

1. Students will inventory the items of their bedroom.
2. Students will list ten objects and write where each object was manufactured. Knowing the country of origin is a must.

#### *In class:*

3. As a class, students will define the word *globalization*.
4. Students will discuss their findings, writing a collective list of product origins on the blackboard.
5. Students will calculate the percentage of products produced in each country.
6. Students will discuss the following questions as a class:
  - a. Do the students find this list surprising?
  - b. Why might so many of the objects be manufactured in other countries?
7. Students will calculate the probability of objects manufactured in China, given the random classroom sample.
8. Students will create a bar graph illustrating their finds, where the x axis is the number of products and the y axis is a listing of countries.

# UNIT FIVE

## RELEVANCE – CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### POST-VISIT ACTIVITY

#### Silk Road Timeline

#### STANDARDS

**World History:** Era 2: Early Civilizations and the Emergence of Pastoral Peoples, 4000–1000 BCE; Era 3: Classical Traditions, Major Religions, and Giant Empires, 1000 BCE–300 CE

#### OBJECTIVE

Students will reflect personal meaning about the history of the Silk Road. They will also place the Silk Road in the context of world history.

#### SUGGESTED TIME

50 minutes

#### PROJECT NEEDS

- ✘ Copy of Silk Road Timeline, one per student. Located in the *Secrets of the Silk Road* Educators' Guide online at <http://www.penn.museum/silkroad>
- ✘ *Secrets of the Silk Road* catalog or images of objects from the exhibition, found online at <http://www.penn.museum/silkroad>
- ✘ Classroom Textbook
- ✘ Class computer lab time

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Teachers will draw a timeline on the black board, labeling the line from 3000 BCE to 1600 CE.
2. As a class, each student will share his/her favorite object discovered in the *Secrets of the Silk Road* exhibition.
3. Students will place their objects on the timeline. *The Secrets of the Silk Road Catalog* and the website images will be consulted for accuracy.
4. Students will examine the timeline handout.
5. Individually, students will select what they feel are the ten most important events that still impact society today.
6. From their textbooks, students will research world events that happened concurrently with the Silk Road. They will select what they feel are the ten most important events that still impact society today.
7. Students will create a timeline featuring their ten Silk Road events and ten world events.  
They can generate and print their timeline online on the following website:  
<http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/timeline/>
8. Each student will present his/her timeline to the class, defending the choices of his/her events.