



# THE NEW JERSEY ITALIAN HERITAGE COMMISSION



## Marco Polo

**Grade Level:** Second & Third

**Subjects:** World History / Geography

**Categories:** History and Society

### **Standards**

Please see page 4 of the lesson plan for complete New Jersey Student Learning Standards alignment.

### **Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

1. identify Marco Polo.
2. track Polo's travels to Cathay and throughout the east.
3. trace the Silk Road(s).
4. determine what modern countries lay along the Silk Roads and along Polo's travels.

### **Abstract:**

Marco Polo used to be taught in every Western Civilization class in the United States. Today, unfortunately, many World Culture classes neglect this intrepid traveler. Polo proved to be a conduit for Western Europe to begin understanding that great civilizations existed in the East, beyond the brilliant Eastern Christian capital of Constantinople. During the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Polo and his family had established relations with the Mongol ruler of China, Kubla Khan, and had even served in the great Khan's court.

As an emissary of the Khan, Polo was able to travel through the Mongol Empire, and he eventually recorded his travels in a book. Unfortunately, many in Italy refused to believe Polo's tales when he first returned from the East. His greatest contribution came a little later, when those who read Polo's book, began to look for ways to get to China, without having to travel through the dangerous Moslem Turkish lands. Christopher Columbus read Polo's book and carried it with me wherever he went.

### **Materials Required:**

Internet access or copies of Internet documents

Red pen, marker, or crayon

Blue pen, marker, or crayon

Green pen, marker, or crayon

## **Background:**

Teachers can read a brief account of Marco Polo's life at the following websites:

- <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12217a.htm>
- <https://www.biography.com/explorer/marco-polo>

Teachers can read about the Silk Road Trade Routes from:

- [https://www.ancient.eu/Silk\\_Road](https://www.ancient.eu/Silk_Road)

## **I. Procedures:**

- Have students read the article on Marco Polo at
- [https://www.ducksters.com/biography/marco\\_polo.php](https://www.ducksters.com/biography/marco_polo.php)
- <http://www.middle-ages.org.uk/marco-polo.htm>
- <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/explorers/page/p/polo.shtml>

## **II. Emphasize to students that:**

- a. Very few western Europeans had ever been to China.
  - b. The Mongols and Chinese were very unfamiliar with the Europeans.
  - c. Back in ancient times there was a Silk Roads that had connected Rome with China.
    - i. The two empires traded.
    - ii. The "Silk Road" was a series of trading routes, over which merchandise between east and west were exchanged. Silk was one of the dominate pieces of merchandise purchased by the West over these trade routes.
- Over the years, the Silk Roads was controlled by Turkic or Tartar tribes that made European-Chinese trade nearly impossible.
  - Sometimes the Silk Roads was open and trade made it through to Constantinople and Italians did receive some of the goods from the East.
  - The Polo Family was known as merchants of Venice, which itself was a prosperous, seafaring city-state.
    - i. Venetians were great travelers, explorers, and merchants.

## **III. Present students with a map of the Silk Roads and Marco Polo's travels from:**

- [http://www.hyperhistory.com/online\\_n2/maptext\\_n2/mongol1.html](http://www.hyperhistory.com/online_n2/maptext_n2/mongol1.html)
- <http://www.silkroadproject.org/silkroad/map.html>

## **IV. On an outline map of Asia, have the students draw the Silk Road(s) in red and Marco Polo's travels in blue, at map #2**

- <http://www.chinahighlights.com/silkroad/map.htm>
- <http://geography.about.com/library/blank/blxasia.htm>
- <http://geography.about.com/library/blank/blxeurasia.htm>

## **V. Then give students a modern map of Asia from their textbooks.**

- i. Have students fill in the names of at least twelve modern countries along the Silk Roads and an additional six countries along the route of Marco Polo's travels in green.

## **VI. Once students have completed the maps,**

- a. Have them explain their maps.
- b. Explain to students that the maps of 1250 were very different than the maps

today.

- i. e. g. Constantinople was the capital of the Byzantine Empire and Eastern Orthodox Christianity.
- ii. Today, Constantinople is called Istanbul and is the largest city in Turkey, a Moslem nation, allied with the west.

**Assessment:**

Teachers will review maps. They will make sure that students have included at least twelve nations on the Silk Road(s) and an additional six nations that Marco Polo had visited.

# New Jersey Student Learning Standards

## English Language Arts

RI.2.1 Ask and answer such questions as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

RI.2.3 Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.

RI.2.7 Explain how specific illustrations and images contribute to and clarify a text.

RI.3.1 Ask and answer questions and make relevant connections to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

RI.3.3 Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

RI.3.7 Use information gained from text features (e.g., illustrations, maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).