

3. INTERACTIVE 3D MAP ACTIVITY

INTRODUCTION

Recommended: [Lesson II: VR Silk Road Field Trip](#)

Note: **CHROME** (best) or Firefox browsers are highly recommended for this activity.
DO NOT USE Safari!

In this fun learning activity, students discover both the physical and cultural geography of Eurasia and the Silk Road by way of five key market cities through which Marco Polo traveled.

The cities: **Venice**, Polo's hometown, then **Tabriz** in Persia, **Samarkand** in Central Asia, **Kashgar**, on the edge of a great desert, and **Dadu/Beijing**, from where Kublai Khan ruled the greatest empire in human history.

Students will customize their own Silk Road maps (no VR headset required) by choosing which artifacts to include, some of which are 3-D.

Note: Some of the higher detail 3-D models may take up to 30 seconds to fully load before being manipulated.

The 5 categories from which to choose artifacts are **Culture, Trade Goods, Animals, Medieval Tech, and the Arts**. All items are native to the regions represented by the various cities. Students will place their chosen artifacts in their proper locales after reading clues and interesting facts about each, exploring those in 3-D, and listening to accompanying sounds and music. Students will save and submit screenshots to their teacher when they have finished their maps, as instructed in the activity.

Small and whole class discussions are recommended at the end.
A final written reflection piece will provide students with writing practice.

This individualized learning pathway ignites a passion for learning as it facilitates in-depth discovery about the fabled trade route and its regional geography!

Class time required: 1 class period + homework

OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to visualize the larger regions of the Silk Road and place the fabled cities within the world's geography.
- Students will gain understanding and knowledge about the regions and resources from short readings (in the form of clues) that will help them choose artifacts and create their maps.
- Students will analyze and rationalize their choices through small group discussions and share-outs, promoting critical thinking and the skill of backing up personal choices with evidence.
- Students will have individual choice as they decide which artifacts in each category are meaningful to them and to history, and which questions they want to answer in their final written reflection piece.
- Students will practice and improve their independent writing with a final reflection assignment.

MATERIALS

Included in the website

- [Interactive 3-D Map Activity](#)
- List of questions (chosen in advance by teacher from the selection in Assessments section below)
- List of animal conservation organizations (a resource page)

Note: Text transcriptions of all audio recordings are provided for ELL and ESL

INSTRUCTIONS

Note: We recommend using CHROME (best) or Firefox browsers for this activity. Do not use Safari

1. Teachers may choose to briefly review the 5 cities, which were explored in the previous lesson ([VR Silk Road Field Trip](#)). A Silk Road map can also be projected, accessible on the website.
2. Each student will open an individual link from the website to the [Interactive 3-D Map Activity](#). Headphones are needed in a group or classroom setting (online and distance learning do not need headsets).
3. Direct students to listen to the introduction to the Silk Road and Marco Polo before the activity begins. (They can skip ahead if they have already been exposed to this material.) Students can click the speaker icon in the upper left corner to turn Denis' voice on or off. Denis will read all of the text on a page if the speaker is left on (helpful to struggling readers, auditory learners, and ELL).
4. Students will follow directions to the activity as they appear on the screen and can work at their own pace. Time allotted will be dictated by your class length. *Alternatively, this assignment can be given as homework.
5. The first section is placement of the cities on a map of the region. The locations must be correct or the student cannot continue. This is a short activity.
6. The second section will require students to choose from 5 categories of artifacts. Here they will make personal choices and must select a minimum of 15 artifacts to place on their maps. Students should be encouraged to explore the categories and learn about the items according to their interests and curiosity.
 - After each artifact is clicked, students must read a pop-up description that contains clues as to its correct placement on the map. (This step cannot be skipped, requiring the students to actually read and learn from each short text.) Alternatively, students can click on the speaker icon and Denis' voice will read the text.
7. When the required number of artifacts have been placed correctly on the map, a button will appear that tells the student to "save your work." Students will take screenshots of their maps, which can be submitted to the Dashboard and graded for participation points. Students should be told to label their submissions to the Dashboard with their last name, followed by the assignment name.
8. Students should keep their maps open or use the screenshots for the discussion that follows, in which they will discuss their map choices (see prompts below).
9. Students will choose from a teacher-curated group of questions (see list below) and write a final reflection that will expand and deepen their thinking on what they have learned and discussed. This can be in short answer or paragraph form and can be done in-class or assigned for homework. See below for instructions.

ASSESSMENTS

1. Each student will submit a screenshot of their map. The maps can be awarded participation points. Suggested methods of collection:
 - Students submit their screenshots to the lesson page on the website, Canvas or other LMS
 - Students show teacher their screenshots as she walks around the room
 - Students add their screenshots to a google doc set up for this purpose
2. Students should be placed in small groups of 3 or 4 where they can discuss their map artifact choices with others. Teachers should circulate and keep the discussions going, and/or ask some students to share their thoughts with the whole class afterwards. Participation points are also possible here.
 - The idea is to assess student knowledge and start them thinking in a way that will help them write their final reflection.

➤ The following questions can be scaffolded for the students' age group (easier questions progress to harder ones in the following list), and should be projected or written on the board to facilitate discussion:

Level 1 Questions

- What was your favorite category to choose artifacts from? Why?
- Which animal was the most interesting to you? Is it extinct, or still around today?
- How did you choose the items you put on your map?
- What artifacts would you use if the map had your town on it? What is your area known for?
- How do you think people were able to share technology and resources amongst these cities?
- If you could choose one technology or artifact to explore further, which would it be? Why does it interest you?
- Which medieval technology do you think was the most important in its time, and why?

Level 2 Questions

- Which technology or artistic idea was the most inspiring (or useful) to people today? How is it being used now (possibly in a different form)?
- By what means did the Silk Road facilitate the diffusion of cultures and religions between geographic regions?
- Which city do you think had the best geographic location to succeed and prosper? Give reasons why.
- Were you surprised by the variety and quality of the artifacts in that time period? If so, why do you think it is surprising?
- Where in the world is this type of cultural diffusion happening today? Think of at least 3 examples.

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3. Finally, each student will choose 2 to 4 questions from the list above and write a reflection that solidifies the student's thoughts and expands on their discussions. This can be done either in the format of short answers or in a 2-3 paragraph format. (Older students should practice using a short introduction and conclusion).

➤ Alternatively, the teacher can curate a shorter list or choose one question as a writing prompt. (Example: Explain why you chose the objects you placed on the map.) This can be an in-class writing assignment or a homework assignment. Grading is at the teacher's discretion.

EXTENSIONS

- Students may want to raise awareness about an endangered species they learned about in this activity. To aid in the animal's conservation, they can research the international organization recommended for that animal on our website.
- As an opportunity for student leadership, students can facilitate ideas for fund-raising and raising awareness among their peers: hold a bake sale or a carwash, sell handmade crafts, make a presentation for a student assembly, etc.
- Students may want to create brochures or make posters to hang in the hallway to raise awareness, or they can start a letter-writing campaign to officials in the region.
- Data can be collected on the species' current numbers and expectations.
- Students can make their own trebuchet! The plans for doing that are included on the Dashboard, along with videos of students making and using their siege machines.