

China Lesson 2

The Silk Road and Silk Road Game

The Basics

Objective: To reinforce information about the Silk Road through artifact discussion and game playing.

Performance of Skill Expectations/Enduring Understandings: The participants learn about the types of items sold along the Silk Road. They will gain knowledge of the perils and pleasures along the Silk Road route and have practice at strategies for trading for profit and for gaining friends.

Prerequisite Lessons: None, but a basic understanding of the Silk Road is necessary. You can find some basic information on the Road in the Silk Artifact Information Sheet. This information sheet and others will give information about the artifacts related to this lesson.

Estimated Materials Preparation Time: Approximately 1 hour.

Duration: Instructor discretion for each session of the lesson. It is suggested that the lesson take 3 days or sessions. Day/Session 1 is for artifact discussion. Day/Session 2 is for modeling/giving instructions for the game. Day/Session 3 is for playing the game.

Materials Provided: Porcelain mug, abacus, coins, silk cloth, art silk cloth, silkworm cocoon, and Silk Road game pieces and instructions.

Materials to be Provided by the Instructor: Zipper bags or small plastic containers to hold pre-sorted sets of cards once they are prepared.

Other Notes: The participants will be working in groups.

Concepts/Vocabulary

none

Procedure

Preparation:

1. For the artifact discussion: Have the artifacts out and ready.
2. For the game: Ensure that all of the instructions have been read and understood. Time is saved during the session itself if all of the game cards are already prepped. It is also helpful if each of the travelers has a small bag or coupon holder to put their cards in.

Introduction/Instruction:

1. Using the information provided and previous knowledge, describe the Silk Road to the participants. Show the participants the porcelain mug, silk cloth, silk cocoon, art silk cloth, abacus, and coins. Using the information from the sheets, explain the history and importance of each commodity. Explain how the abacus would have been important for a merchant who needs to make calculations while selling items along the Road and how coins were used increasingly to replace barter for items bought and sold. Here are some main points:

- Silk is the thread of a silkworm cocoon.
- Art silk, or artificial silk, is a modern item created to look like silk but be cheaper to make.
- Porcelain is a very fine, white pottery that is often decorated with a colored glaze.
- The Chinese kept the secret of making silk and porcelain for centuries, allowing them to be the only ones to offer these items for sale.

2. Playing the game: See separate game instruction sheet.

It is suggested that, instead of just giving instructions, you actually model a visit to a city with you as the traveler. You may wish to pick ahead of time the “chance” cards you will model, so you have the best opportunity to demonstrate playing strategies.

Reflection: Generate a short discussion with these questions:

- What do you think would be one of the pleasures of traveling the Silk Road?
- What would you dislike the most about traveling the Silk Road?
- If you were a traveling merchant, what kinds of goods would you prefer to sell? Would you prefer to travel long distances and see more places, or have a short route to travel that you knew well?

Assessment: Does the game go more smoothly the second day than the first? What things did the participants learn about the Road and history in general from the game, as detailed in your discussion?