



**Silk Road: Trading Goods and Currency**  
(with focus on China)

A lesson for Eastwood Elementary 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade  
Students ages 6-8

Designed by Loren Fawcett, Education Assistant

Time Frame: (2) 50 minute class periods

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**I. Theme/Subject:** Students will explore concepts such as bartering, trade, and consumerism as they study the Silk Road. Students will also learn about the evolution of Chinese currency as it relates to the trade along the Silk Road. Students will relate learning experiences to modern day consumerism as they have studied in previous Social Studies units.

**II, Objectives/Concepts:**

- Students will reinforce map reading skills learned earlier in the year.
- Students will read the map and identify the Silk Road path.
- Students will use a map key.
- Students will gain an understanding and appreciation of the terrain along the Silk Roads.
- Students will learn about the geography, economics, and history of the Silk Road.
- Students will reflect on the history and culture in northwest China through their own experiences and knowledge.
- Students will compare bartering to trading.
- Students will explore the differences between modern day trade and trade along the Silk Road.
- Students will compare methods of transportation used today in trade to that used along the Silk Road.
- Students will learn about ancient forms of currency in China and its evolution to paper money and modern day coins.
- Students will practice writing Chinese characters.
- Students will improve fine motor skills as they create their Chinese characters using three-dimensional paint.
- Students will learn to mix and blend colors.

**III, Standards:**

**A. National:**

1. Visual Arts

- NA-VA.K-4.1 Standard #2: Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories
  - NA-VA.K-4.1 Standard #3: Students use art materials and tools in a safe and responsible manner
  - NA-VA.K-4.2 Standard #1: Students know the differences among visual characteristics and purposes of art in order to convey ideas
2. Social Studies
- NSS-C.K-4.4 Other Nations and World Affairs: how is the world divided into nations and how do they interact with one another
  - NSS-EC.K-4.1 Scarcity: Productive resources are limited. Therefore, people cannot have all the goods and services they want; as a result they must choose some things and give up others
  - NSS-EC.K-4.3 Allocation of Goods and Services: There are different ways of distributing goods and services and there are advantages/disadvantages to each
  - NSS-EC.K-4.5 Gain from Trade: Exchange is trading goods and services with people for other goods and services or for money. The oldest form of exchange is barter the direct trading of goods and services between people. People voluntarily exchange goods and services because they expect to be better off after the exchange.
  - NSS-G.K-12.1 The World in Spatial Terms: Understand how to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire. Process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
  - NSS-G.K-12.2 Places and Regions: Understand how culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions.
  - NSS-US.H.K-4.4 The History of Peoples of Many Cultures Around the World: Understand selected attributes and historical developments of societies in Asia
3. Language Arts
- NL-ENG.K-12.9 Multicultural Understanding: Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

## **B. Ohio State standards:**

1. Visual Arts
- Benchmark 1B: Use historical artworks such as paintings, photographs, and drawings to answer questions about daily life in the past.
  - Benchmark 2A: Demonstrate increasing skill in the use of art tools and materials.
  - Benchmark 2B: Establish and communicate a purpose for creating artwork.
  - Benchmark 2D: Begin to revise work to a level of personal satisfaction.

- Benchmark 3A: Use details (e.g., tilted objects, yellow-orange sun or striped shirt) to describe objects, symbols, and visual effects in artworks.
  - Benchmark 3B: Use context clues to identify and describe the cultural symbols and images in artworks.
  - Benchmark 5C: Construct a 3-dimensional model to represent a topic or theme from another subject area
  - Benchmark 5D: Describe ways they use visual art outside the classroom and provide examples.
2. Social Studies
- History *Daily Life* Benchmark C4: Use historical artifacts, photographs, biographies, maps, diaries and folklore to answer questions about daily life in the past.
  - History *Daily Life* Benchmark C5: Identify the work that people performed to make a living in the past and explain how jobs in the past are similar and/or different from those of today.
  - History *Daily Life* Benchmark C6: Identify and describe examples of how science and technology have changed the daily lives of people and compare:
    - a. Forms of communication from the past and present;
    - b. Forms of transportation from the past and present.
  - Geography Benchmark A4: Read and interpret a variety of maps.
  - Economics *Scarcity and Resource Allocation* Benchmark A1: Explain how resources can be used in various ways (ie: silk into thread, kimono, etc)
  - Economics *Production, Distribution, and Consumption* Benchmark B2: Explain how people are both buyers and sellers of goods and services.
  - Economics *Production, Distribution, and Consumption* Benchmark B3: Recognize that most people work in jobs in which they produce a few special goods or services.
  - Economics *Production, Distribution, and Consumption* Benchmark C4: Explain why people in different parts of the world earn a living in a variety of ways.
  - Economics *Markets* Benchmark C5: Recognize that money is a generally accepted medium of exchange for goods and services and that different countries use different forms of money.
  - Citizenship *Responsibilities* Benchmark B2: Demonstrate self-direction in tasks within the school community
  - Social Studies Skills and Methods *Obtaining Information* Benchmark A1: Obtain information from oral, visual, and print sources.
3. Language Arts
- Reading Process Benchmark D: Compare and contrast information between texts and across subject areas.
  - Research Benchmark A: Generate questions for investigation and gather information from a variety of sources.
  - Research Benchmark B: Retell important details and findings.

#### IV, Vocabulary:

- *BCE*: Abbreviation for "Before Common Era," which coincides with BC, or Before Christ.
- *Bartering*: exchange of goods for other goods without the use of money.
- *Buddhism*: The oldest, prevalent missionary faiths. Its essential message is that earthly life is impermanent and full of suffering. The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth can be ended through enlightenment, which is achieved through Buddhist faith and practice.
- *Caravan*: group of traders with a line of camels to carry the trade goods A group of travelers or traders journeying together, often through a desert with the aid of pack animals to carry the trade goods.
- *Caravansary*: An inn built around a large courtyard to accommodate human and animal travelers. Caravansarais (plural).
- *Chang'an*: Capital city of Tang dynasty China (now Xi'an).
- *China*: continent in Asia
- *City*: A large community where people live and work
- *Common Era*: The period coinciding with the Christian era or AD. Abbreviated "CE."
- *Compass Rose*: Arrows on a map that show directions (north, south, east, west).
- *Consumer*: A person who buys and uses goods and services.
- *Continent*: One of the largest bodies of land on the earth.
- *Crops*: Kinds of plants that people grow for food or other uses.
- *Currency*: (*cur·ren·cy noun*) a: something (as coins, treasury notes, and banknotes) that is in circulation as a medium of exchange  
b: paper money in circulation  
c: a common article for bartering
- *Desert*: A dry place where very little rain falls
- *Dynasty*: (*dy·nas·ty noun*) a powerful group or family that maintains its position for a considerable time
- *Emporium*: A marketplace.
- *Geography*: The study of the Earth and its people
- *Goods*: Things that people make or grow.
- *Invention*: Something that has been made for the first time.
- *Landform*: A kind of land such as a mountain, hill, or plain.
- *Map*: A drawing that shows where things are.
- *Map Key*: A list of the symbols on a map that tells what the symbols stand for.
- *Merchant*: A person who engages in buying and selling for a living.
- *Mountain*: The highest kind of land.
- *Nomad*: An individual, often a member of a group, who migrates from place to place. In Central Asia, the nomadic way of life is often attributed to the ability to feed horses and livestock.
- *Oasis*: A fertile spot in the desert. Towns often crop up in oases (plural) to service weary travelers.

- *Ocean*: A very large body of salty water.
- *Pedaling Trade*: informal selling of goods along the streets.
- *Producer*: A person who makes or grows something.
- *Resource*: Something people use that comes from the earth.
- *Route*: (*noun*) a: a line of travel; course.  
b: an established or selected course of travel or action.  
c: a way to go from one place to another.
- *Services*: Jobs people do that help others.
- *Steppe*: A large area of land that is usually flat, dry and treeless. Originally a Russian word for large expanses of Central Asia.
- *Symbol*: A picture that stands for something real.
- *Trade*: to give money, goods, or services to get something in return.
- *Transportation*: Any way of moving people or things from place to place.

## V. Materials:

### Day One:

#### For Presentation:

- Map of Chinese Silk Road
- Map key
- Map parts (icons to represent traded goods such as: grapes, nuts, chrysanthemums, salt, spices, wine, ceramics, horses, camels, silk, tea, onions, paper, etc.)
- Posters to hold map icons before being placed onto map

#### For Studio:

- Cardboard disks (One per student) \*
- "Puffy Paint" (One per two students) \*\*
- Scrap paper for placemat (One sheet per student)
- Pencils
- Chinese coin character examples

*\*Cardboard disks were purchased at Hollo's Papercraft in Brunswick, Ohio for \$.05/ea. Cake disks or conventional cardboard can be substituted, although inner circles must be cut out by an adult.*

*\*\*Puffy paint or any paint that dries 3-dimensionally can be used. Color is irrelevant since students will be sponge painting over the color on the second day. This can be money saving for teachers since colors are often discontinued and marked down in price.*

**Day Two:****For Presentation:**

- Map of Chinese Silk Route\*
- Examples of Traded Goods (with sticky backing to go on map)\*

*\*Map was made from tracing onto transparency paper and using an overhead projector to enlarge. Large map was made from felt, and velcro was attached to individual pieces so that they can be removed and placed easily.*

**For Studio:**

- Cardboard disks with dried three-dimensional characters
- 50 1/2" Sponge brushes (one per student)
- Paint trays
- Paper towels
- Newspaper or newsprint
- Gold acrylic paint
- Bronze acrylic paint
- Green acrylic paint
- Blue acrylic paint

**VI. Strategies and Procedures:****A. Engage (motivation) and Explore:****Setting the Context:**

- Ask students if they have ever traded or bartered anything before (e.g. a shirt, baseball cards, candy, etc) for something that they wanted from someone (e.g. baseball cap, stamps, stickers, etc.)
- Compared to today, where items can be ordered and shipped within hours across the world, during the ancient times of China goods traveled much slower and trade was a long and dangerous process.
- Routes or paths of travel were created from city to city; goods were never directly moved from one place to the next. Instead, they passed through many hands and often changed shape or form along the way.
- A silk robe reaching the west side of Europe might have started out as silk fibers and threads on the easternmost side of China. At yet another post, it would be dyed with rich color. From there, it would have traveled to another trading post where it would have been woven into silk cloth. Finally, it would reach a final destination where it could be cut and sewn into an article of clothing such as a robe.
- As items changed hands, they were exchanged from the producer or carrier of the goods to someone else in return for either money or another item that the merchant wanted.

- Explain the difference between bartering and trading. (Using objects v. using money)
- Describe some of the objects traded along the Silk Road.
- Coming from the west: grapes, onions, salt, spices, horses, wool/woven rugs, nuts, wine
- Coming from the east: camels, chrysanthemums, literature, music, ceramics, silk, tea

**Leading into the Activity:**

- Describe currency and the different types of coins, such as the evolution of Chinese currency from using livestock and cowry shells to the use of coins.
- Note the dangers that merchants experienced along the Silk Road as they traveled.
- Note the benefit of using coins (easier to take with them). Camels were better as beasts of burden as they could carry heavier objects and last longer with less food or water.
- Describe the shape of the cast round coin (2 different—one with a round center and one with a square)
- The coin with the square center represented the common belief system of the universe: the round outside of the coin = heaven; the square rim inside = earth
- Practical use of the coin with a hole in the center was to be strung along a leather cord, tied to belts. Easier to count as they were grouped by 100's and easier to carry.
- Chinese coins were cast in Bronze.

**B. Create:**

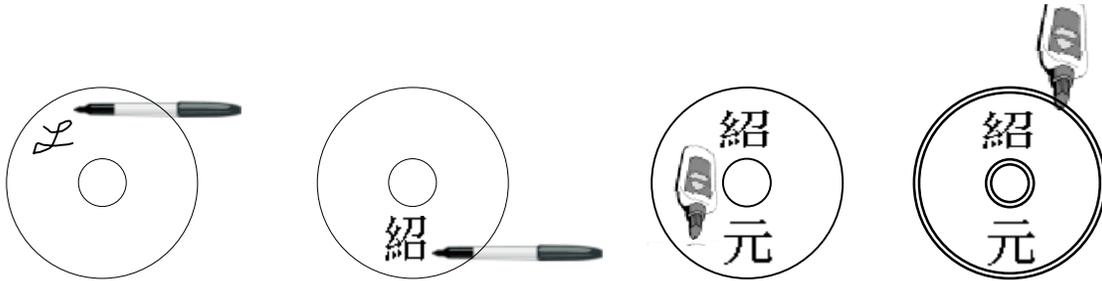
Students will have two sessions to create a large version of an ancient Chinese coin.

Each student will have the opportunity to pick and choose from a variety of coin designs used during the different dynasties that participated in trade along the Silk Road. Once students have chosen their designs, they may begin to sketch them out onto the cardboard disks. Students will then apply “puffy paint” over their sketches of the Chinese characters on their coins. After drying, the students will use sponge brushes to paint the surface of the coins to make them look aged and weathered.

**Day One:**

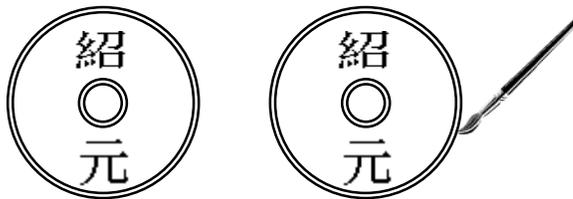
1. Each student will receive one cardboard disk.
2. Students will write names on back of cardboard disks.
3. Students will choose a coin/characters from examples on handouts.
4. Students will sketch Chinese characters onto front of cardboard disks.

5. Students will share “puffy paint” (one per two students) and trace over their sketched characters to make them three-dimensional.
6. Students will also paint the “rims” of the coins.
7. Students will set projects aside to let paint dry.



### Day Two:

1. Each student will receive a tray to share with a partner containing blue, green, gold, and bronze paint.
2. Each student will use a sponge brush to apply paint to surface of coin.
3. Students may choose to use a small paintbrush to touch up areas of coin,
4. Students will set coins aside and let dry overnight.



### VII. Assessment:

Hold an open discussion to evaluate what concepts have been retained. Encourage students to ask questions and explore the Silk Road further via the Internet or at the public library.

To assess the activity, check for the following:

- Student came prepared with materials.
- Student practiced good listening skills and exercised proper safety procedures.
- Student handled materials properly.
- Student has written name on back of coin.
- Student drew Chinese characters in pencil onto the disk before tracing with Puffy Paint.

- Student traced all pencil lines.
- Student traced both the inner and outer circle of the coin with Puffy Paint.
- Student mixed and blended paint colors well.
- Student neatly sponge-painted the top of the coin.
- Student was careful not to get paint on the table, using the scrap paper as a placemat.
- Student cleaned up surface are neatly.

### **VIII. Closure:**

Reflect upon vocabulary. Relate as much of the unit to modern day trade and consumerism as possible. Have students compare Chinese coins and currency to American money. Discuss the changes American money has gone through such as adding watermarks and color to the paper and the issuing of state quarters each year.

### **IX. Across the Curriculum:**

**A. Math:** Have students practice addition and subtraction using coins. Students can “purchase” items at markets along the Silk Road and improve upon their math skills as they pretend to be merchants.

**B. Art:** Have students create their own artwork such as ceramic vases or paintings on mulberry paper that would have been found or traded along the Silk Road. Have students make their own paper out of pulp.

### **X. Resources:**

#### **A. Books:**

1. Major, John. *The Silk Route: 7000 Miles of History*. Harper Trophy, 1997. This is a good review for young children of the geographical route, major cities, and products that were moved along the Silk Roads. Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE).
2. *Along the Silk Road: People, Interaction, and Cultural Exchange*. Stanford University, 1993. This curriculum resource contains excellent maps for use in creating Big Maps.

#### **B. Websites:**

1. <http://www.asiasociety.org/>
2. <http://www.ess.uci.edu/~oliver/silk.html>
3. <http://www.maps-of-china.com/>
4. <http://www.chinapage.com/silkroad.html>
5. <http://www.artsmia.org/arts-of-asia/china/readings/>