

## TEACHER'S CORNER: THE SILK ROAD BIG MAP

compiled by Betty Belanus and Merrill Feather



The Smithsonian Folklife Festival's Silk Road Program will offer educators a wealth of first-hand experiences with contemporary practitioners of the arts and the skills that made the ancient trade route famous.

This map activity is excerpted from the kit, *Silk Road Encounters*, a project of the Silk Road Project, Inc. made possible by the Ford Motor Company with additional resources provided by the Asia Society. Designed for elementary grades through high school, this activity will help students create their own large-format map of the Silk Road, which can serve as the basis for further study, both historical and contemporary. Since many of the countries along the Silk Road have been in the news recently, this map can have multiple uses.

You can order free-of-charge the whole *Silk Road Encounters* kit, which includes a teacher's guide, source book, CD sampler of Silk Road musical instruments, a set of 11 slides, and a 30-minute video. Order from: <http://teachers.silkroadproject.org> You can also download the text of the teacher's guide and source book from the web site. Those unable to attend the Festival can make a virtual visit to the Silk Road trade routes via the Internet or through Folkways Recordings at [www.folkways.si.edu](http://www.folkways.si.edu)

This "Teacher's Corner" will require three to four class periods. **For this activity, refer to the Silk Road map on page 2.**

### BIG MAP ACTIVITY

#### Overview

Using a projected map outline, students will generate an oversized rendition of the Silk Road trade routes from Europe to East Asia. Students will then apply elements such as political and topographic features, the Silk Road, products of the regions, and the travel routes of key travelers. Students may continually add information to the map, and the map may be used as a reference tool throughout the teaching unit.

**Objective.** Students will

- locate and map key topographic features along the Silk Road.
- identify and map the Silk Road, key cities, and trade products.
- generate and use a map key.
- gain an understanding and appreciation of the terrain along the Silk Road.

#### Materials

- overhead projectors
- overhead transparencies of a simple outline map of Europe and Asia, preferably with rivers but no writing. The transparencies can be made by copying a reproducible map onto an acetate transparency in a copy machine. See suggestions in reference section for places to find maps. Use one transparency per projector.
- tape
- permanent markers
- colored pencils
- one poster board or 3-foot by 5-foot piece of butcher paper for each student
- atlases
- reference materials (texts or Internet access)

#### Procedure

1. Set up as many overhead projectors as possible. Each overhead should be arranged to project the map image onto butcher paper or poster board that has been taped to a smooth wall surface. Center the image so that it fills the entire paper, then tape the transparency to the overhead projector's surface to avoid slippage.

2. Have students work in pairs to trace the outline of the map and rivers using permanent markers. Avoid jostling the overhead as it is difficult to realign the image. Tracing requires about 20 minutes per map. Trace the following:



- geo-physical features, including deserts, mountains, plateaus, and bodies of water
- political features, including key cities, empires, or countries
- The Silk Road routes as they extend from Europe to East Asia
- Silk Road products of key regions (use symbols placed along the routes and a product key, attached separately to keep the map uncluttered)
- routes of famous travelers of the Silk Road regions
- a key for the mapped features

Older students can include additional information, such as animals, crops, mineral deposits, cultural monuments, or majority religions. Consider working on the maps intermittently through a larger unit, adding layers of information each time. Maps can be used as reference tools throughout the study period.

### Extensions

Have students make up a list of ten questions that can be answered by using their Big Maps. For example: "What is the name of an oasis city on the Southern Silk Road." "What desert did Chinese caravans heading west first encounter?" Exchange questions among students to review their knowledge and test the accuracy of their maps.

### References

Bonavia, Judy. 1999. *The Silk Road: From Xi'an to Kashgar*. Revised by William Lindesay and Wu Qi. Hong Kong: Odyssey.

This travel guide has exceptional illustrations and maps for use with middle or upper grades.

Major, John. 1997. *The Silk Route: 7000 Miles of History*. Harper Trophy.

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). 1993. *Along the Silk Road: People, Interaction, and Cultural Exchange*. Stanford University.

This curriculum resource contains excellent maps for use in creating the "big maps."

### Travel the Silk Road Via the Web

The Asia Society, dedicated to teaching and learning about Asia: <http://www.AskAsia.org>

The Silk Road Foundation contains maps, timelines, and extensive bibliography on travelers and cities on the Silk Road: <http://www.silk-road.com>; wysiwyg://main.286/<http://www.silk-road.com/artl/silkhistory.shtml>. On the history of silk.

The China Page has good reference maps: <http://chinapage.com/silksite.html>

<http://library.thinkquest.org/13406/sr/> Contains a map that links Europe and Asia through trade.

<http://www.schirmer.com/silkroad/timeline.html>  
Provides a timeline of events.

### Hear the Silk Road on Folkways Recordings

"The Silk Road: A Musical Caravan" is a 2-CD sampler of the extraordinary range of instrumental and vocal music from Iran, Japan, China, Turkey, Afghanistan, Mongolia and a host of other Central and East Asian countries. The recording will be available this spring through Folkways Recordings.

Other Folkways Recordings of interest to educators include:

*Bukhara: Musical Crossroads of Asia* (SF 40050); *Tuva, Among the Spirits: Sound, Music and Nature in Sakina and Tuva* (SF 40452); *Classical Music of Iran: The Dastgah Systems* (SF 40039); and *Richard Hagogian: Armenian Music Through the Ages* (SF 40414). Each of these recordings includes extensive liner notes placing the music in historical, geographic and cultural context. You can search the Folkways catalog on-line or order recordings at: [www.folkways.si.edu](http://www.folkways.si.edu) or call: 1-800-410-9815 in U.S. and 202-275-1143 internationally.

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