

*Mapping Trade Across Europe, Africa, and Asia*

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| **Introduction**  |
|  Trade has always been a key feature of human society. Other people have what we need or want, and in return we can give them things that we have. Trade has provided immense benefits—food variety, luxury goods for our aesthetic needs, resources for tools and industry, as well as cultural and intellectual stimulus—but it has also been used to facilitate oppression, violence, and exploitation through things like the slave trade or violence against indigenous communities who stood in the way of resource acquisition. Trade has happened across the world and has grown in tandem with the expansion of human settlements and the demands of ever-growing populations. This lesson is an opportunity to explore the vast networks of trade that existed in the times around the medieval period and the Middle Ages using geography skills and incorporating economic ideas of trade. This lesson can be adapted for introductions to transcontinental trade, or it can be a review of prior discussions that were geographically segmented but can now be put together for larger comparative discussion. |
| **Indiana Standards Connections:**  * Social Studies 6.1.6: Identify trade routes and discuss their impact on the rise of cultural centers and trade cities in Europe and Mesoamerica.
* Social Studies 6.4.1: Give examples of how trade related to key developments in the history of Europe and the Americas
 | **Compelling Question(s):**   What did trade look like across Europe, Africa, and Asia during the Medieval Period and Middle Ages? What resources, cultural traditions, and social practices were exchanged between different cities and regions through trade?       |
| **Lesson Objectives:**   Students will be able to analyze a map outlining trade routes and discuss the historical connections between different parts of the world. Students will be able to identify major regional centers of trade and their cultural, economic, and historical importance.Students will be able to explore the things that were traded between important cities and regions during the Medieval era and Middle Ages, including natural resources, cultural items, intellectual and scientific developments, luxury goods, and more. |
| **Materials**  |
|   [This website](https://merchantmachine.co.uk/medieval-trade-routes/) giving students access to a detailed map of trade routes across Europe, Africa, and Asia. Other maps such as those found online, in textbooks, or in other resources are also fine, provided they show different trade routes through the various regions with attention to particular cities along each route.   |
| **Learning Plan**  |
| **Activities**  This activity will have students breaking up into groups to study different regions around Europe, Asia, and Africa as they pertain to trade.1. Pull up the website showcasing the map of trade routes across Europe, Asia, and Africa. Have a brief conversation with students about the different regions of the world. What can they identify already? That is, it might be a good place to start to confirm that students can identify Europe, Africa, and Asia with general reference to sub-regions or specific cities or countries that students know (e.g. China, Spain, the Roman and Byzantine Empires, etc.).
2. If including standards that focus on other geography lessons, take a moment to review important map features such as the title, legend, scale, orientation, dates, and authors.
3. Split students into groups and assign each group a region of the map to study. Some suggestions: North Africa; Western Europe; Eastern Europe and the Byzantine Empire; West and South Asia; East Asia. Each of these regions have unique political, cultural, social, and natural features that they contribute to a trade network that extends thousands of miles.
4. Students will first take time to explore their assigned region for major cities and trade relationships and find out what those cities and regions had to offer for trade. This information can be found through textual research online, or through archaeological catalogs available online.
5. Have students begin to make connections between their region and the exports of other regions by identifying things that were found in their area, but would not have been local to it.
6. Example: Use the Diptych Fragment to explain that elephant ivory was imported to Europe to make important religious artifacts. Elephants are not local to Europe, and so the ivory had to be imported from Africa. But due to its high price, it was possible to replace elephant ivory with walrus ivory, which was more readily available in Northern Europe. [This chess piece](https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/a-queen-from-the-lewis-chessmen-af096aa7ca934f84b6d64c89a8e312d4) is made of walrus ivory. Have students discuss the implications for making something precious like a religious item with an expensive ivory, versus a game piece with cheaper materials. *Who would have been able to afford each? What can we infer about the cultural and social implications of being able to import these materials? How did the trade of resources, luxury items, or utilitarian items also facilitate ideas about culture and society?*
7. As students begin to find items that they believe were imported to their region or exported from it, have them start to catalog their items, including visual representations and descriptions of where the item was found, where it might have originally been from, and what significance it held. Students can then present these to the class, potentially through filling in a large-scale physical or digital map for the whole class.
8. Have a group discussion about the importance of trade for historical as well as contemporary development. Ask students to look at some of their own possessions and see if anything they own is from someplace else. Why might that be?

An alternative to this activity is for you to provide the students with a few items/resources that were found in their region (e.g. silk and porcelains from China, ivory from Africa) so students don’t have to spend additional time finding the resources on their own. Students could then just investigate the importance of those items and why they might have been valuable or desirable enough for trade.Have students examine what kinds of exchanges were happening within their region (essentially what were they known for exporting, talk about that) and what notable imports were found within their region (to make connections between regions. Use the chess piece and diptych as examples. How did the trade of natural resources, aesthetic luxury items, or utilitarian items also facilitate the transfer of culture and social movements? |
| **Assessment Suggestions**    Students can be assessed for group participation and the creation of a group presentation on their region and the trade found within it. |
| **Extensions**  Trade is not just about the transfer of goods, but also the exchange of ideas. You can do a deeper dive into how religion was spread through trade routes. While this lesson covers the primarily land trade routes around Europe, Africa, and Asia, this activity can also be done in different time periods across the Atlantic.  |

Fragment of a Diptych Activity Possibilities

Some of the best opportunities for education are *integrative*—meaning that students are able to make connections across disciplines to reinforce the knowledge that they are developing. For example, they may be learning about Renaissance Italy in World Studies at the same time that they read Dante’s *Inferno* in English class while also studying Botticelli in Art. Feel free to combine and adapt some of the ideas across disciplines and standards to best suit your particular context. You can also collaborate with other teachers at your school or supplement the resources provided by contacting your librarian.

**Note: The following ideas are meant to give general guidance for teachers to include artifacts and other material culture in their classrooms. They are not meant to be treated as comprehensive activities or lessons that are one-size-fits-all for any classroom. They should be personalized to best fit the needs of a teacher’s individual context in accordance with prior student learning, student abilities, available resources, and any curricular guidance.**

**Art**

**Visual Arts – Presenting:**

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| VA:Pr4.1.Ia | Analyze, select, and curate artifacts and/or artworks for presentation and preservation. |
| VA:Pr6.1.2a | Analyze how art exhibited inside and outside of schools (such as in museums, galleries, virtual spaces, and other venues) contributes to communities. |

*Art cannot be understood in a vacuum—it is important to understand the context around its presentation. What stories are told in the way that an artifact is presented and described? Whose voice is used? What might be missing? What is the importance of having art presented and viewed as part of the community? As part of our culture?*

*These are all questions that students can think about as they search online for pieces of art that they would want to put together in an art exhibit. What story do they want to tell with the items they choose? How do they justify those decisions? Students can begin to develop argumentation skills by having to articulate why certain pieces of art (and the cultures they represent) should be included or excluded.*

*As students develop their exhibit, they can also practice writing the labels that would appear alongside the item. What information is critical for the audience to have? How can you take the narrative behind your exhibit and best convey it to your audience? There can also be a spatial/visual component by asking students to actually design their exhibit space and describe a particular narrative that they want to accomplish through the construction of the space and the ordering of the objects.*

**Social Studies**

**Grade 6: History, Places, and Cultures in Europe and Americas**

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| 6.1.2 | Describe and compare the beliefs, the spread, and the influence of religions throughout Europe and Mesoamerica.  |
| 6.1.6 | Identify trade routes and discuss their impact on the rise of cultural centers and trade cities in Europe and Mesoamerica.* Florence, Genoa, Venice, Naples, Tenochtitlan, Machu Pichu, and Teotihuacan
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| 6.3.4 | Describe and compare major cultural characteristics of regions in Europe and the Western Hemisphere. Ex: Language, religion, recreation, clothing, diet, music/dance, family structure, and traditions. |
| 6.3.11 | Differentiate between the terms anthropology, archeology, and artifacts while explaining how these contribute to our understanding of societies in the present and the past.  |
| 6.4.1 | Give examples of how trade related to key developments in the history of Europe and the Americas.* Examples: The growth of trading towns and cities in medieval Europe led to money economies, competition to expand world trade led to European voyages of trade and exploration.
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*As students begin to explore the world at a young age, they can utilize tactile experiences to gain an understanding of the material processes that have been developed by people throughout history. As with other standards, these are conducive for pairing with Arts and Language Arts standards. These standards are well-suited to cross-cultural study. Students (either individually or in small groups) could be assigned a society for study and they could use that civilization as a lens throughout the semester to study things like art, science, religion, language, etc. Students could present on these findings periodically and expand their understandings of how various civilizations developed parallel to each other.*

*Grade 6 does a lot to investigate the development of Europe as a hub of trade, culture, and science. The diptych fragment is a testament to the importance of trade in both resources and ideas. In addition to the lesson on trade (above), you can also have students look through the lens of religion as they examine the growing interconnectedness of Europe, Africa, and Asia. Different forms of Christianity dominated most of Europe, but Islam had significant strongholds in Spain, as well as in parts of Africa and West Asia alongside smaller, local belief systems. There was also a Jewish presence around Europe, and in South and East Asia you can find Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religions. Students can search for art styles or other material culture that represents the spread of religion and share that information with the class.*

**World History and Civilization**

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| WH.3.6 | Explain the role of Christianity as a unifying force in medieval Europe. |
| WH.7.2 | Locate and analyze primary sources and secondary sources related to an event or issue of the past. |
| WH.7.5 | Use technology and historical data in the process of conducting and presenting historical research.  |

*Religion is often covered only briefly, or not covered at all, in social studies lessons. This period in European history is particularly fascinating for studying the spread and influence of religion because of how pivotal it was to so many aspects of society. Religious institutions were major stakeholders in the governing authorities across the continent. Students can investigate specific religious traditions or parts of the continent for established religious traditions and practices. This can help students learn about demographic data that might be available (What religious groups were present around Italy?) or about the connections between religion and other social institutions (such as the Divine Right of Kings).*

**Language Arts**

**Grade 1 Reading Skills**:

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| 1.RL.2.3 | Using key details, identify and describe the elements of plot, character, and setting. |
| 1.RL.3.1 | Identify the basic characteristics of familiar narrative text genres (e.g. fairy tales, nursery rhymes, storybooks). |
| 1.RL.4.1 | Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events |

*As students are introduced to stories and narrative forms, items like the diptych fragment can be referenced as methods of communicating the people and stories that are important to u.. Teachers can ask students to try and interpret what might be happening in the scenes in diptychs and other archaeological evidence and can ask how it is a different way to tell a narrative than through methods they are more familiar with.*

*Students could try drawing their own scenes that would go in their own diptych, or they can copy scenes from stories that are being told in class. (Tying into Art as well) What elements of the story would need to be present in the scene so the story is understood?*

**Grade 5 Writing Skills:**

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| 5.W.3.3 | Write narrative compositions in a variety of forms that—* Develop the exposition (e.g., describe the setting, establish the situation, introduce the narrator and/or characters.
* Develop an event sequence (e.g., conflict, climax, resolution) that unfolds naturally, connecting ideas and events using transitions.
* Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
* Use precise and expressive vocabulary and figurative language for effect.
* Provide an ending that follows from the narrated experiences or events.
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| 5.W.5 | Conduct short research assignments and tasks on a topic.* With support, formulate a research question (e.g., What were John Wooden’s greatest contributions to college basketball?).
* Identify and acquire information through reliable primary and secondary sources.
* Summarize and paraphrase important ideas and supporting details, and include direct quotations where appropriate, citing the source of information.
* Avoid plagiarism and follow copywright guidelines for use of images, pictures, etc.
* Present the research information, choosing from a variety of sources.
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*Students can use artifacts that have narrative components—like the diptych—to begin to develop and practice their writing of fiction and the stylistic elements that go along with it. Teachers can separate students into small groups and each group has to write a story that would fit the scene happening on their piece of pottery. Students can work collaboratively, or they can work individually. If students work collaboratively, they can then present as a group to the rest of the class. If they work individually, they can “Jigsaw”, where new groups are formed by taking one person from each of the original groups and having students share their individual pieces in small groups.*

*There is also the option for students to learn how to conduct research on people, places, or things using the diptych and other artifacts like it as a guide. The teacher can distribute artifacts to students (either individually or as groups) and can demonstrate how to conduct research.*

*Both of these options also provide teachers to assess conventions of standard English, as well as other language arts skills.*

**Grades 11-12 Literature**

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| 11-12.RL.4.1 | Analyze multiple interpretations or adaptations of a story and evaluate the extent to which multiple interpretations of a story, play, or poem stay faithful to or departs from the text or script, and analyze the impact of the interpretations on the audience. |
| 11-12.RL.4.2 | Analyze and evaluate works of literary or cultural significance in history for the way in which these works have used archetypes drawn from myths, traditional stories, or religious works, as well as how two or more of the works treat similar themes, conflicts, issues, or topics, and maintain relevance for current audiences. |

*As students begin interpreting more advanced texts, it is worth noting that the stories depicted on items like the diptych are also interpretations of stories that may bear similarities or differences to other versions that they may be familiar with. These pieces of art can be starting points for students to interpret the stories across time—starting with visual depictions on pottery all the way to adaptations in film and television. Students can find adaptations and present their similarities or differences; describe enduring qualities and importance that some narratives have for communities; or develop their own adaptations that are unique from others that they have seen. This is also an opportunity to provide comparative aspects by letting students examine works from across the globe.*