



# The Silk Roads: Then and now

from the Esri GeoInquiries™ collection for World History

Target audience – World history learners

Time required – 15 minutes

## Activity

Explore the Silk Roads transfer of goods, ideas, and disease yesterday and today.

## Standards

**C3: D2.His.1.9-12.** Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place, as well as broader historical contexts.

**C3: D2.His.14.9-12.** Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

## Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to compare the Silk Road to the Iron Silk Road.
- Students will be able to analyze geographic factors contributing to location of the Silk Roads.

Map URL: <http://esriurl.com/worldHistoryGeoInquiry7>

## Ask

### Where were the Silk Roads?

- Click the link above to launch the map.
- Click the lines on the map that make up the Silk Roads – Trade Routes.
- ? Is the Silk Road one continuous route or many segments? [*A network of multiple routes*]
- Click the large green arrow on the map and read the text out loud.

## Acquire

### How did physical geography affect the Silk Road routes?

- With the Details button depressed, click the button, (Show) Contents.
- Click the checkbox to the left of the layer name, Global Biomes.
- Click the layer name, Global Biomes to see a legend.
- ? Which biome has the largest extent along the Silk Roads? [*Deserts*] with some exceptions
- ? Which biomes did the Silk Roads go around? [*Typically around mountain grasslands*]
- ? What do the stars represent along the Silk Roads? [*Oases*]
- Click the Mountains bookmarks and click the three mountain icons.
- ? What benefit would the tall mountains and rivers provide to travelers of the Silk Roads as they traversed the deserts on this part of the Silk Roads? [*Tall, snowy mountains stored water that fed rivers and oases, providing water for the caravan animals and travelers.*]

## Explore

### How long would it take to traverse the Silk Roads?

- Click the button, Measure. Choose the Distance tool and set it to Miles.
- Zoom out and click the star representing the farthest west oasis (Constantinople) on the Silk Roads. Measure along the route that the oases are on to the farthest east star (Xi'an). [*See the Measure Tool tip on page 2.*]
- ? How far is it from Constantinople to Xi'an? [*Approximately 5,000 miles*]
- ? If a camel could travel approximately 25 miles in a day every day over any terrain, how long might it have taken to travel the entire main Silk Road? [*Approximately 6 months*]



## Analyze

### Why were there so many routes along the Silk Roads?

- Recall the previous content (in Explore section) and physical geography along the Silk Roads.
- ? How did merchants travel so far for such long periods of time? *[They traveled in segments, from one oasis to the next, traded goods to the next caravan, and then went back the other direction with new goods (like a relay).]*
- ? During these long caravan trips, what non-tangible items might have also been exchanged or diffused (whether intentionally or unintentionally)? *[Ideas, religion, disease, culture]*



## Act

### Are the routes used by the Silk Roads still important today?

- Turn on the layer, Iron Silk Road.
- Click the Iron Silk Road on the map and read the pop-up.
- ? Why was the “new” railroad from Europe to Asia coined the Iron Silk Road? *[Both offer transport of goods, people, and ideas across the same vast continents.]*

### MEASURE TOOL

- Click Measure, select the Distance button, and from the drop-down list, choose a unit of measurement.
- On the map, click once to start the measurement, click again to change direction, and double-click to stop measuring.
- Hint: Position the area of interest on the map so that it is not obscured by the Measure window.

### MAP LAYER VISIBILITY

- Make sure that the Details pane is selected, and click Show Contents Of Map.
- To show individual map layers, select the check boxes next to the layer names.
- Hint: If a map layer name is light gray, zoom in or out on the map until the layer name is black. The layer can now be turned on.

## Next Steps

### DID YOU KNOW?

ArcGIS Online is a mapping platform freely available to public, private, and home schools. A school subscription provides additional security, privacy, and content features. Learn more about ArcGIS Online and how to get a school subscription at <http://www.esri.com/schools>.

### THEN TRY THIS...

- Students can create a story map of their choice, highlighting a Silk Road city of their choice and its impact on today’s world.
- Use the Create Buffers analysis tool and the Silk Road Cities layer to ascertain how far it was from one Silk Road city to another.



## TEXT REFERENCES

This GIS map has been cross-referenced to material in sections of chapters from these high school texts.

- *World History by Glencoe — Chapters 2, 3 & 9*
- *World History by Prentice Hall — Chapter 7*
- *World History by Holt — Chapter 3*
- *World History: Patterns of Interaction by McDougal Littell — Chapters 10 & 12*