

The Silk Road

The Silk Road was not actually a road. It was not paved. It was not even a *single* route. The Silk Road was a name given to any route that led across China all the way to Rome. It was a 5,000-mile long trip! At one end was China. At the other end was Rome. Each had something the other wanted. Rome had gold and silver and precious gems. China had silk and spices and ivory. Ideas also traveled along the Silk Road, ideas that eventually affected everyone.

For a long time, the Romans had been searching for "The Silk People." They discovered samples of silk from the groups of people they conquered. Silk quickly became popular in Rome. However, the Romans did not know who was making this wonderful material. The people they conquered did not know who was making silk either. They simply traded for it. The Romans sent out people to find the makers, but most never returned. It was a long process, but eventually, Rome and China finally met on the Silk Road.

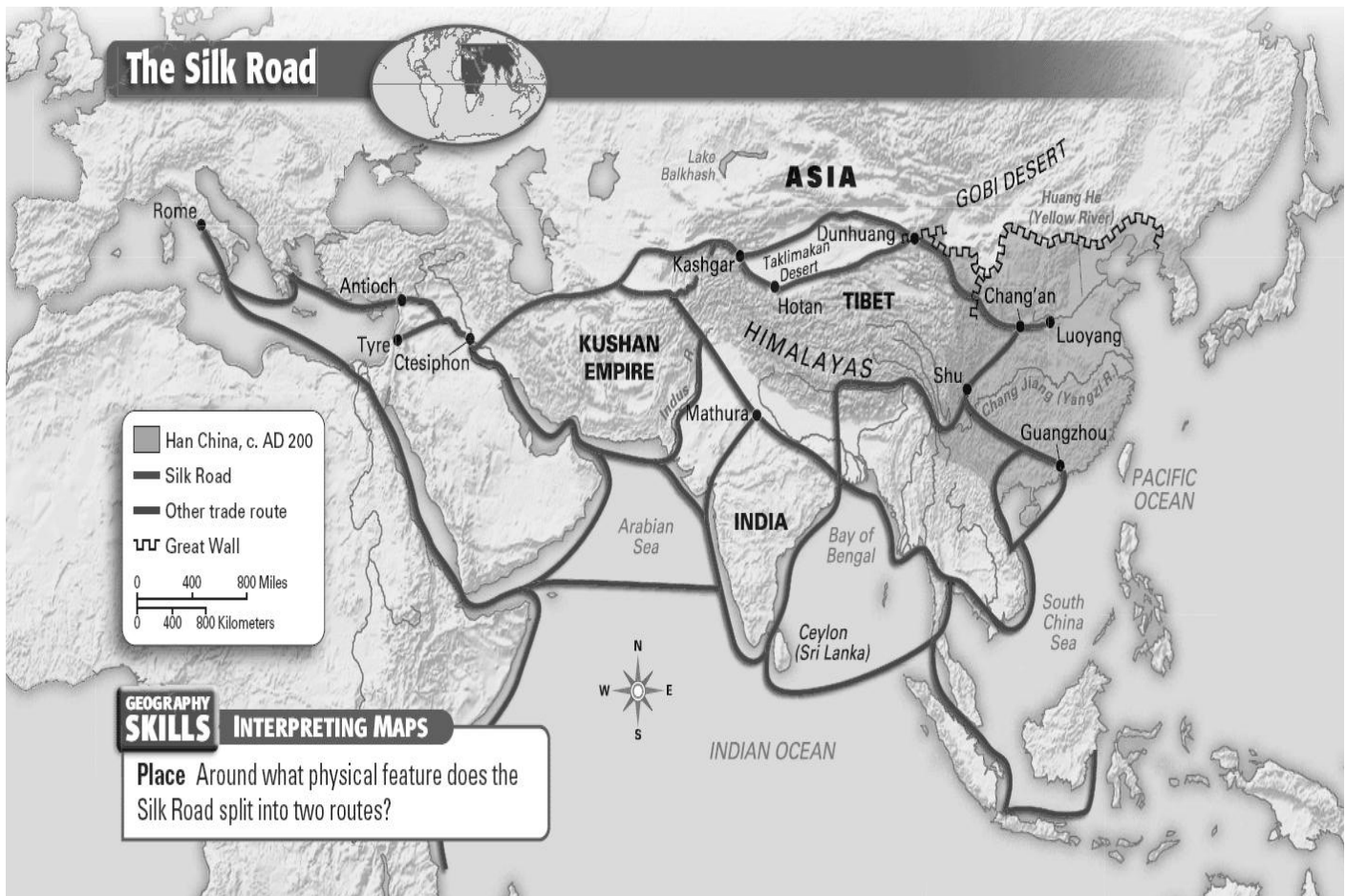
The rewards were great, but the dangers were many. It was incredibly dangerous to travel along the Silk Road. You faced desolate white-hot sand dunes in the desert, forbidding mountains, brutal winds, and dangerous animals (especially poisonous snakes!). The only spot on the Silk Road that was relatively pleasant was the Gansu Corridor, a relatively fertile strip that ran along the base of one of the mountains. But, to reach this fertile strip, you had to cross a desert or mountains. And of course, there were always bandits and pirates. Very few traders made the entire trip. They worked in relays. Each trader would go a certain distance, exchange their goods for other goods, and hopefully return. The next would move along the road, trade, and hopefully return.

The Silk Road took caravans to the farthest extent of the Han Empire. Sections of the Great Wall were built along the Northern Side of the Gansu Corridor to try and prevent bandits from the north side harming the trade.

Over the centuries, the Silk Road developed a civilization of its own. Where possible, the Silk Road became lined with huge temples and booming cities. But there were still the mountains and deserts to deal with. It was never easy to travel along the Silk Road.

Despite the dangers, there were still many merchants on the Silk Road. Each trip had the potential to bring in more and more riches. A trader could obtain many items on the Silk Road, besides just silk. Gold, silver, bronze, iron, furs, ivory, spices, and foods were some of the several materials traded on the Silk Road.

With so many people from different cultures trading along the Silk Road, ideas were shared as well. Many ideas and inventions of the Chinese traveled to Europe and the Middle East, and many ideas and inventions from Europe and the Middle East traveled to China. The Silk Road was a perfect route for Cultural Diffusion.



Directions: Answer the following questions using POQ (Complete sentences!)

1. Where did the Silk Road begin and end? How long of a route was the Silk Road?

2. How did the Romans first learn about Silk?

3. Why was it so dangerous to travel along the Silk Road?

4. Was it worth it to be a merchant on the Silk Road? Why or why not? (No POQ)