

## **Lesson Planning**

**Unit: The Motivation to Explore**

**Title of lesson: Did Marco Polo Have Maps to Follow?**

**Timeframe: 1 session, 45 min. (approx.)**

**Standards addressed:**

**Alaska State:**

GA1, GA3,

**Social Studies Knowledge, Skills, Dispositions:**

Understand the maps used at the time of Marco Polo

Examine the changes in map knowledge from the years before Marco Polo through the years before Columbus (1320 – 1482)

See and analyze the relationship between maps

Work cooperatively with partners to review maps

**Learning objectives:** At the completion of this lesson, students will know & be able to:

Understand and appreciate the changes in knowledge of the world and in maps that were used in the 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Cooperative skills addressed:**

Work cooperatively in small groups (teacher can establish group jobs, if wished).

**Technology inclusion:**

**Resource site: Edsitement/Marco Polo Unit – Mapping the Past**

**Edsitement.neh.gov/view\_lesson\_plan.asp?id=328 (Collection of maps through history collected from various sites)**

**Materials needed: Copies of Maps; three are included here, or the teacher may research and copy or have large display copies of maps of his/her selection.**

## **Lesson Plan/Lesson Design**

- 1. Prior assignment/preparation** – Students will have had introduction to timeline use, discussion of how historical information is gained, and should know continents, countries, and seas and oceans of the world.
- 2. Opening activity** – Personal connections with maps: What kind of maps do you use? When do you use them? What is necessary to have a good map? Have you made maps for your own use? You've seen the Viking maps, what do you know about maps at the time of Marco Polo? Lead into activity below.
- 3. Specific lesson design**—Mapping during Marco Polo's World  
Do this activity with the whole class with overheads and/or large maps at the front of the class or have sets of copies of 1 each of the maps and a list of the questions with groups of 2-4 students. With groups of students, have a class discuss afterwards to share their discoveries. For either method be sure to debrief as a group and make a table or visual of the observations and discoveries.
- 4. Assessment**—  
Participation in and with group and group notes  
The students can choose an activity with the maps in their history notebook, such as

copy group information, make simple diagrams of the shape of each map, label, date, and describe, or make a map of someplace they know but they can't look at it, measure it, or use anything other than a pencil. Then they can decide whether they are closer to Visconte, Higden, or Ptolemy in skills and why.

**Additional Lessons:**

1. Use a map of EurAsia to fill in major cities known then, continents, oceans, and countries that were significant. Know Constantinople and Turkey. Use current names but fill in under the major ones the names used then. Spend some time with mountains and passes and note other impassable areas. Do activities to become knowledgeable.
2. Study the trade routes and the items traded. (For example, pepper was so valuable it was once part of the ransom paid to a Visigoth king to persuade him to spare Rome. It brought wealth to Venice and Genoa. It was used as money and was used to pay rent. Spices were valuable!).
3. Read a story of Marco Polo and his travels. Read excerpts from his book.
4. Use the EDSITEment unit On the Road with Marco Polo. Study the silk road—and silkmaking. Study Persian carpets. Study tea and spices on the sites they have laid out. You can also study the countries involved.
5. Use The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, ([metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org)) interactive exhibit with geography and culture entitled “In the Footsteps of Marco Polo”.  
<http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/Marco/index.html>.
6. Finish with this lesson after students are familiar with Marco Polo, trade routes, and the dependence of Europe on products from the Far East. Have a large map on which the trade routes can be put. Using inquiry, analyze and discuss the various items that would be traded, the routes that would be followed, and key cities and geographical features. What would happen if... certain parts of the routes would be blocked? Read the attached text to set the ground work for the growth in exploration that would follow, see supplemental document, The Block of Constantinople.

**Bibliography:**

Baicker, Karen. Primary Sources Teaching Kit, Explorers. New York: Scholastic Professional Books, 2002.

Editors of American Heritage, Discoverers of the New World. New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., 1960.

“Mapping the Past”.

<[http://edsitement.neh.gov/view\\_lesson\\_plan.asp?id328=:>](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id328=:>)(17 June, 2004)

Hakim, Joy. A History of US: The First Americans. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

“In the Footsteps of Marco Polo”.

<<http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/Marco/index.html>. (20 June, 2004)

“Map of Marco Polo’s Route”. <<http://www.silk-road.com/maps/images/polomap.jpg>> (20 June, 2004)

“On the Road with Marco Polo.” EDSITEment, 2001 and updated.

[http://edsitement.neh.gov/view\\_lesson\\_plan.asp?id488=:](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id488=:) (20 June, 2004)

“Polo, Marco.” The New Encyclopaedia Britannica. 1984 ed.

“Vesconte and Higpen Maps”. <http://www.henry-davis.com/MAPS/Lmwebpages/lml.html> (18 June, 2004)

**Suggested Resources:**

Roberts, Patricia. Literature-Based History Activities for Children, Grades 4-8. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997.