**#8—Crash Course World History**

**The Silk Road & Ancient Trade**

1. The Silk Road was not a road; it was an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ route where merchants carried goods for trade. But it was really two routes: One that connected the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Mediterranean to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Asia and one that went from Central Asia to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. Further complicating things, the Silk Road involved \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ routes: Many goods reached Rome via the Mediterranean, and goods from Central Asia found their way across the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to Japan and even Java.
3. So we shouldn’t think of the Silk Road as a road but rather as a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of trade routes.
4. So what’d they trade? Well silk, for starters. For millennia, silk was only produced in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. It is spun from the cocoons of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ tree-eating worms and the process of silk making as well as the techniques for raising the worms were closely guarded secrets, since the lion’s share of China’s wealth came from silk production.
5. But the Silk Road wasn’t all about silk. The Mediterranean exported such clichéd goods as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, olive oil, and wine. China exported raw materials like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, silver, and iron. India exported fine \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ textiles; the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that originated in East Africa made its way across the Silk Road; and Arabia exported \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and spices and tortoise shells.
6. With the growth of the Silk Road, the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ people of Central Asia suddenly become much more important to world history. Much of Central Asia isn’t great for agriculture, however, it lends itself fairly well to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and since nomads are good at moving around, they’re also good at moving stuff from Point A to Point B, which makes them good traders. Plus all their travel made them more resistant to diseases.
7. One group of such nomads, the Yuezhi, were humiliated in battle in the 2nd century BCE by their bitter rivals the Xiongnu, who turned the Yuezhi king’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ into a drinking cup, in fact. In the wake of that the Yuezhi migrated to Bactria and started the Kushan Empire in what is now \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and Pakistan.
8. Although Silk Road trading began more than a century before the birth of Jesus, it really took off in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ centuries CE, and the Kushan Empire became a huge hub for that Silk Road trade.
9. The cities that had been founded by nomadic peoples became hugely important. They continued to grow, because most of the trade on the Silk Road was by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and they had to stop frequently; these towns became fantastically wealthy:
10. Silk was so popular among the Roman elite that the Roman senate repeatedly tried to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ it, complaining about trade imbalances caused by the silk trade and also that silk was inadequately \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. And yet all attempts to ban silk failed, which speaks to how much, even in the ancient world, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ shaped governance.
11. The merchant class that grew along with the Silk Road came to have a lot of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_clout, and in some ways that began the tension that we still see today between wealth and politics.
12. Did the Silk Road affect the rest of us? Yes, for three reasons.
* First, wider \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ impact. Relatively few people could afford silk, but a lot of people devoted their lives to making that silk.
* Second, the Silk Road didn’t just trade luxury goods. In fact, arguably the most important thing traded along the Silk Road: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. For example, the Silk Road was the primary route for the spread of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* The variation of Buddhism that took root in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Korea, Japan, and Central Asia is known as Mahayana Buddhism, and it differed from the original teachings of the Buddha in many ways, but one that was fundamental. For Mahayana Buddhists, the Buddha was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The idea of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ also transformed from a release from that cycle of suffering and desire to something much more heavenly. Rather than focusing on the fundamental fact of suffering, Mahayana Buddhism offered the hope that through worship of the Buddha, or one of the many bodhisattvas – \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who could have achieved nirvana but chose to hang out on Earth with us-one could attain a good afterlife.
* Many merchants on the Silk Road became strong supporters of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ which in turn became convenient weigh stations for caravans.
* A third reason the Silk Road changed all our lives, worldwide interconnectedness of populations led to the spread of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Measles and Smallpox traveled along it, as did bubonic plague, which came from the East to the West in 534, 750, and—most devastatingly—in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This last plague—known as the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_—resulted in the largest population decimation in human history, with nearly half of Europeans dying in a four-year period. If you look at it that way, the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ fostered by Silk Road affected way, way more people than just those rich enough to buy silk, just as today’s globalization offers both promise and threat to each of us.