

Teacher Overview Objectives:

Han Dynasty Golden Age

NYS Social Studies Framework Alignment:

Key Idea	Conceptual Understanding	Content Specification	Objective(s)
<p>9.3 CLASSICAL CIVILIZATIONS: EXPANSION, ACHIEVEMENT, DECLINE: Classical civilizations in Eurasia and Mesoamerica employed a variety of methods to expand and maintain control over vast territories. They developed lasting cultural achievements. Both internal and external forces led to the eventual decline of these empires. (Standards: 2, 3, 5; Themes: MOV, TCC, GEO, GOV, CIV)</p>	<p>9.3c A period of peace, prosperity, and cultural achievements can be designated as a Golden Age.</p>	<p>Students will examine the achievements of Greece, Gupta, Han Dynasty, Maya, and Rome to determine if the civilizations experienced a Golden Age.</p>	<p>1. Identify the achievements of the Chinese during the Han Dynasty.</p>

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Was the Han Dynasty a golden age?

Objective: Identify the achievements of the Chinese during the Han Dynasty.



A lot of the artifacts that appear in museums come from the golden ages of civilizations.

In this activity, you will visit exhibits on the Han Dynasty. **As you learn about the Han Dynasty, fill out the appropriate row in the [Golden Ages of Classical Civilizations Graphic Organizer](#).**

Exhibit A: Civil Service Exam



Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_examination#/media/File:Palastexamen-SongDynastie-Kaiser.jpg

The **civil service examination system** was a method of recruiting civil officials to work and maintain a **stable government**. These exams were **based on merit and skill** rather than family or political connections. Passing the rigorous exams, which were based on classical literature and philosophy, offered a highly sought-after status. Any male adult in China, regardless of his wealth or social status, could become a high-ranking government official by passing the examination. They were **tested on their knowledge of the Confucian classics**, their ability to write, and the "Five Studies": military strategy, civil law, revenue and taxation, agriculture, and geography.

Civil service exams still exist today and are one way that government jobs are filled in the state of New York.

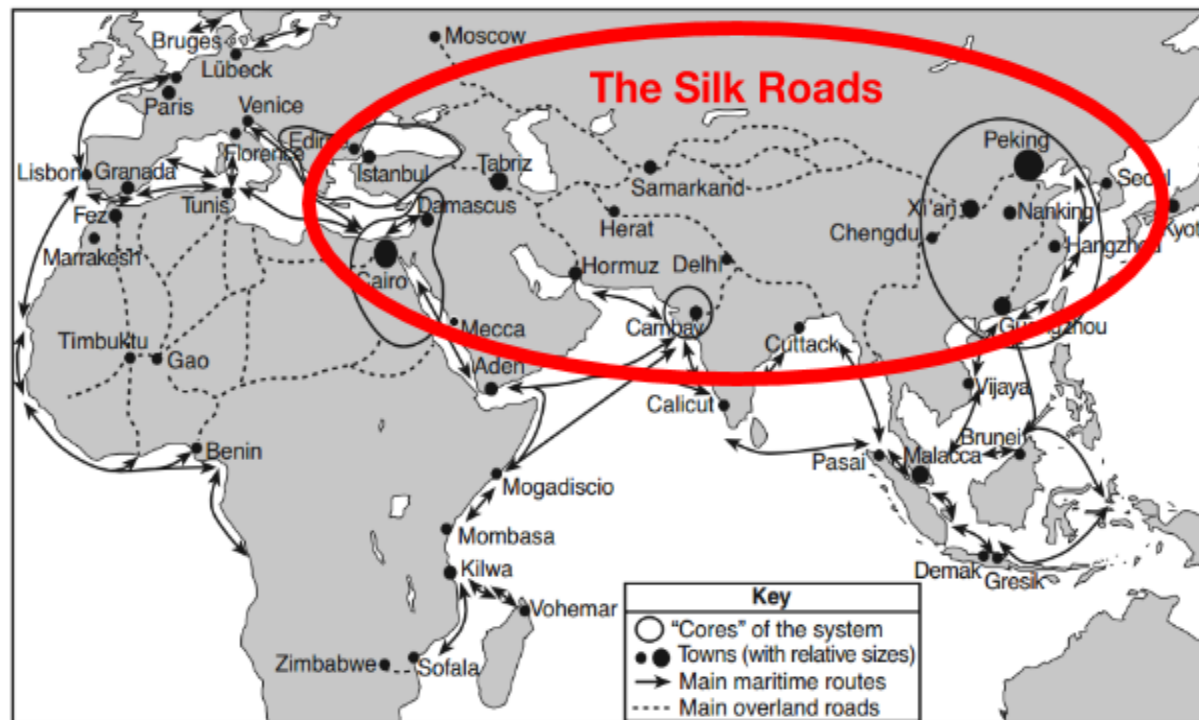
Adapted from: <https://www.princeton.edu/~elman/documents/Civil%20Service%20Examinations.pdf>,
[http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Imperial_Examinations_\(Keju\)](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Imperial_Examinations_(Keju))

Exhibit B: Silk Roads

▶ Watch this [TED-Ed Video on The Silk Road](#), read the text below, and examine the maps ([transcript of the video](#)).

The “Silk Road” is the name often given for the vast network of land and maritime [over water] trade routes between the Mediterranean Sea and East Asia. The Silk Road covered more than 4,600 miles and was in use from about the 2nd century BCE to the 15th and 16th centuries CE. However, the name ‘Silk Road’ is relatively recent. It was coined by the German scholar, Ferdinand von Richthofen, in 1877. He derived the term from Rome’s historical connection to the trade route and their love of silk.

Source: Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center, “Journeys Along the Silk Road-Unit 1- Middle-High School.”
http://www.indiana.edu/~iaunrc/content/journeys-along-silk-road-unit-1-middle-high-school#_ftnref1



Source: Philippe Beaujard in "The Indian Ocean in Eurasian and African World-Systems before the Sixteenth Century," *Journal of World History* (adapted) from the NYS Global History and Geography Regents Examination, August 2012

Silk Routes, c. 600



Exported from Rome

Goods:

Wool and linen textiles
Carpets
Mediterranean coral
Bronze vessels
Lamps
Glass vessels and glass beads
Wine
Huge quantities of coins
Opium

Religion:

Christianity

Exported from China

Goods:

Silk
Weapons
Porcelain
Jade
Tea
Paper
Gunpowder
Medicines
Inventions (compass, wheelbarrow, crossbow)

Exported from the Middle East

Goods:

Incense (from southern Arabia)
Dates, pistachios, peaches, walnuts
Frankincense and myrrh
Glassware
Olive oil
Silver vessels (especially the work of the Sasanian craftsmen of Persia)

Religion:

Islam

Exported from India

Goods:

Household slaves
Pets and arena animals
Exotic furs
Cashmere wool
Raw and finished cotton
Sandalwood and other exotic woods
Cane-sugar
Perfumes and aromatics
Gems (rubies, sapphires and emeralds; diamonds)

Religion:

Buddhism

Exported from Southeast Asia

Precious and semi-precious stones
Jewelry, ivory, tortoiseshell, rhinoceros horn, seashells and pearls
Ornamental woods
Spices (especially pepper, ginger, cardamom, turmeric, nutmeg and cloves and cinnamon)
Cochineal and indigo used for dyeing fabrics and cosmetics

Exhibit C: Silk- A Valuable Product in China and Europe



What is it? How was it made?

Watch this [American Museum of Natural History Video on Silk Making](#)

Where did silk spread? Why?

“The silk that constituted China’s chief export remained a mystery fabric to Greeks and Romans for many years. They heard many possible explanations, such as that it was made from bark on trees. Not until the mid-sixth century did the Byzantine emperor learn from two monks that the cloth was a product of silkworms feeding on mulberry leaves.

By the first century CE silk clothes were popular on the streets of Rome among its wealthy citizens. Much consumption of silk, at both ends of the Silk Road, was devoted to religious activities. Christian priests used purple silk embroidered with gold silk thread for their vestments. Kings, priests, and saints were shrouded in silks at their burials; even burials from long ago were dug up and shrouded in silk. In the Buddhist areas, yards of silk were used for banners, sometimes tens of thousands at one monastery. Buddhist laypeople made donations of silk to monasteries as a reward for the monks’ intercessions and as a way to gain merits for future life. The monks, in turn, traded silk for daily provisions and for the “seven treasures” used to decorate their *stupas*, or shrines: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, red coral, crystal, pearls, and agate. During affluent times, Buddhist monasteries thus became significant economic entities.”

Source: Brown, Cynthia Stokes. *Big History: From the Big Bang to the Present*. New York: The New Press (2007), 129.

Classical Civilizations in 200 CE



Source: Adapted from <http://www.timemaps.com/history/world-200ad>

What impact did Silk have in Rome?

Quick Facts About The Impact of the Silk Trade on Rome

- “by the time of the Roman Emperor Augustus (27 BCE – 14 CE), trade between China and the west was firmly established and silk was the most sought after commodity in Egypt, Greece, and, especially, in Rome.”
- Romans valued silk at its weight in gold
- Politicians tried to ban the sale of silk because Romans were spending all of their money on it instead of buying Roman goods and products of more use
- Politicians also tried to ban silk because they thought it was immoral because it was too revealing when worn

Source: Ancient History Encyclopedia, http://www.ancient.eu/Silk_Road/

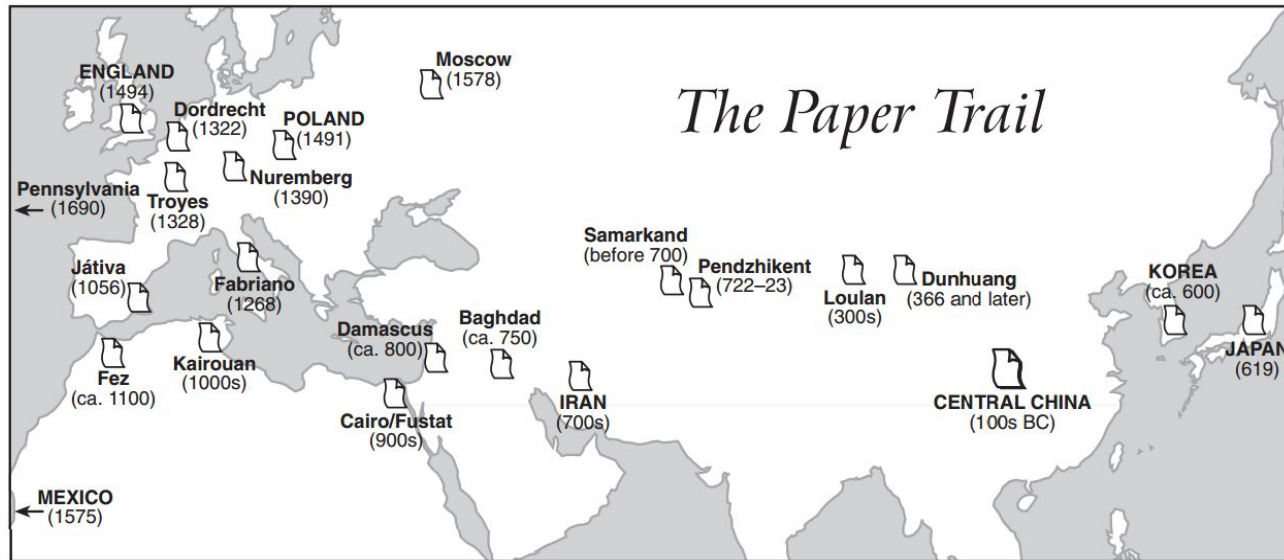
Exhibit D: Paper and Paper Making

How was it made?



Watch this [Video Clip from China: The Dragon's Ascent on the process and history of papermaking](#) and [Hello China's Video on Chinese Paper.](#)

When and where did it spread?



Source: Aramco World, May/June, 1999 (adapted) from the NYS Global History and Geography Regents Examination, June 2005

What impact did it have?

Paper was invented during the Han dynasty, probably just at the time the Silk Road trade was beginning to flourish...paper soon became the writing material of choice throughout China and East Asia. It was found also in the Buddhist temples of China's northwest, but seemed not to make inroads beyond that for a long time, perhaps in part because the Chinese tried to protect the secret of its manufacture, and perhaps because other writing materials, such as parchment and papyrus, were well established in the west.

Under the Mongols in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a group of Chinese workmen set up a papermaking establishment in Samarkand. Their product quickly spread by trade and imitation, and paper soon supplanted other writing materials in most of western Eurasia.

In China, the invention of paper stimulated the invention of printing, sometime during the 6th century CE—a development energetically supported by Buddhism, according to which the duplication of sacred texts was an act of religious merit. The re-invention of printing in Europe centuries later did not employ East Asian-style printing technology, but it may have been stimulated by accounts of Chinese printing that could have circulated in the Middle East.

Source: "Silk Road: Spreading Ideas and Innovation" by John Major

<http://www.asiasociety.org/countries/trade-exchange/silk-road-spreading-ideas-and-innovations..>

Exhibit E: Compass



Watch [Hello China- Compass Video](#) and [Han Dynasty Compass](#) videos and read the information below.

What is it?	A device that uses magnetic forces to help the user determine which direction is North.
Where and when was it invented?	China around 200 BCE during the Han Dynasty
What problem did it solve?	The compass helped travelers more accurately determine which direction they were headed. This was especially difficult at sea and on cloudy nights when one could not use the stars to navigate.



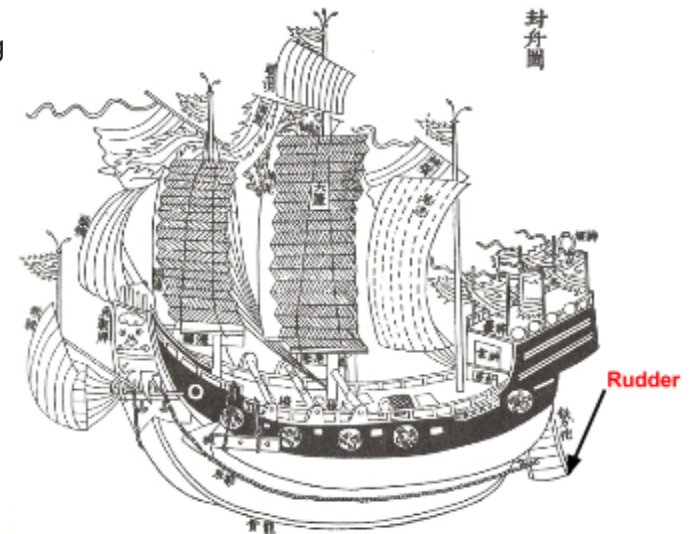
Replica of a Han Dynasty compass.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Model_Si_Nan_of_Han_Dynasty.jpg

Exhibit F: The Junk with Rudder

A **junk** is a Chinese sailing vessel. The English name comes from Javanese *djong* (Malay:*adjong*), meaning 'ship' or 'large vessel'. Junks were originally developed during the **Han Dynasty** and further evolved to represent one of the most successful ship designs in history. Junks were used both for military combat and for trade, traveling long distances on rough inland rivers and at across the sea. Numerous accounts by early Chinese historians and by medieval travelers describe the junks and attest to their size and efficiency.

Junks incorporated numerous **technical advances** in sail plan and hull designs that were later adopted in Western shipbuilding. The **sails** were rigged so that they could direct wind into each other, allowing the junks to sail into the wind and to travel in heavy winds and rough seas. **Multiple compartments** were built in the **hull**, accessed by separate hatches and ladders, and similar in structure to the interior of a bamboo stem. These could be made watertight to slow flooding, but the front compartments often had “limber holes” that allowed water to enter and leave the compartment, helping to ballast [stabilize] the ship in rough waters. Junks employed stern-mounted **rudders** centuries before their adoption in the West, though the rudder, origin, form and construction was completely different. **The rudder helped steer the ship.**



Print of a junk from the 1300s CE.

Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:YuanJunk.JPG#/media/File:YuanJunk.JPG>

Exhibit G: Art

Like the ancient Egyptians, the Han-dynasty Chinese had complex beliefs concerning the afterlife. They referred to the tomb as a “subterranean palace” (*digong*), and filled it with items they believed the soul needed after death. The most striking of these are ceramic and wood sculptures of soldiers, maids, and other servants, including dogs to guard the tomb’s entrance. The tomb walls were decorated with murals, or with designs on ceramic tiles envisioning the afterlife.

Source: http://honoluluuseum.org/art/exhibitions/12444-han_dynasty_arts_afterlife/

Female Dancer



Western Han dynasty (206 B.C.–9 A.D.), 2nd century B.C.

Earthenware with slip and pigments; H. 21 in. (53.3 cm)

This figure is a quintessential example of early Chinese sculpture, which found its highest expression in the third to first centuries B.C. Unlike the geometric approach of the Greeks, the Chinese sculptors sought to capture the “life spirit” of the human subject, concentrating on facial expression and a posture that suggests movement—in this instance, a moment in a dance.

Source: <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1992.165.19>

Se player



Han dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.), 1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.

Pottery; H. 6 in. (15.2 cm)

Long zithers (instruments with string attached to both ends of a hollow wood body) of various types were developed in East Asia, and during their long history, many—notably the *qin* and the *se*, which were often paired—changed their shapes while retaining their names. The instrument depicted here is either a proto-*se* or a stylized rendition of the actual instrument, likely of the type found in archaeological site of the Warring States period (5th–3rd century B.C.). Unlike the *se* shown here, the typical example had large tuning pegs at only one end and probably more than four strings.

Source: <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1994.605.85a-c>