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Teacher Overview: *What was the Mediterranean Sea Complex? How did the Mediterranean Sea Complex affect the civilizations connected by it?*

[Go directly to student-facing materials!](#)



Unit Essential Question(s): How did classical civilizations gain, consolidate, maintain and lose their power? | [Link to Unit](#)

Supporting Question(s): What was the Mediterranean Sea Complex? How did the Mediterranean Sea Complex affect the civilizations connected by it?

Objective(s):

- **Describe** the location of the Mediterranean Sea complex.
- **Explain** how the Mediterranean Sea Complex affected the civilizations connected by it.

Alignment to State Standards

1. [NYS Social Studies Framework:](#)

Key Idea	Conceptual Understandings	Content Specifications
<p>9.4 RISE OF TRANSREGIONAL TRADE NETWORKS: During the classical and postclassical eras, transregional trade networks emerged and/or expanded. These networks of exchange influenced the economic and political development of states and empires. (Standards: 2, 3, 4; Themes: GEO, ECO, TECH, EXCH)</p>	<p>9.4a Afro-Eurasian transregional trade networks grew across land and bodies of water.</p> <p>9.4c Interregional travelers, traders, missionaries, and nomads carried products and natural resources, and brought with them enslaved people and ideas that led to cultural diffusion.</p>	<p>Students will identify the location of the transregional trade networks noting regional connections between the Indian Ocean complex, Mediterranean Sea complex, Silk Roads, and Trans-Saharan routes.</p> <p>Students will identify and explain the importance of at least two key resources and/or products and/or luxury items vital to exchanges along the Indian Ocean complex, Mediterranean Sea complex, Silk Roads, and Trans-Saharan routes.</p> <p>Students will identify trade networks involved in the exchange of enslaved people and explore the nature</p>

of slavery during this time period.

Social Studies Practices

[NYS Social Studies Practices](#)

Gathering, Using and Interpreting Evidence (A2, A3, A5, A6, A7)
Comparison and Contextualization (C5, C6)
Geographic Reasoning (D1, D2, D5)

[New Visions Student Social Studies Practices](#)



Think Like a Geographer

The act of analyzing an event by considering how environments affect human activities and how human activities affect physical environments.



Contextualize

The act of describing the geographic, economic, political, and historical circumstances of an event on a local, regional, and global scale.

[Common Core State Standards](#)

Depending on how you structure your lesson, you may address different standards. Below, are the standards that we believe are most important for this lesson.

Reading	Writing	Speaking and Listening
<p>Craft and Structure: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.</p> <p>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7: Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9: Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.</p>	<p>Text Types & Purposes: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1: Write arguments focused on <i>discipline-specific content</i>.</p>	<p>Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p>

Where is the Mediterranean Sea Complex?

Objective:

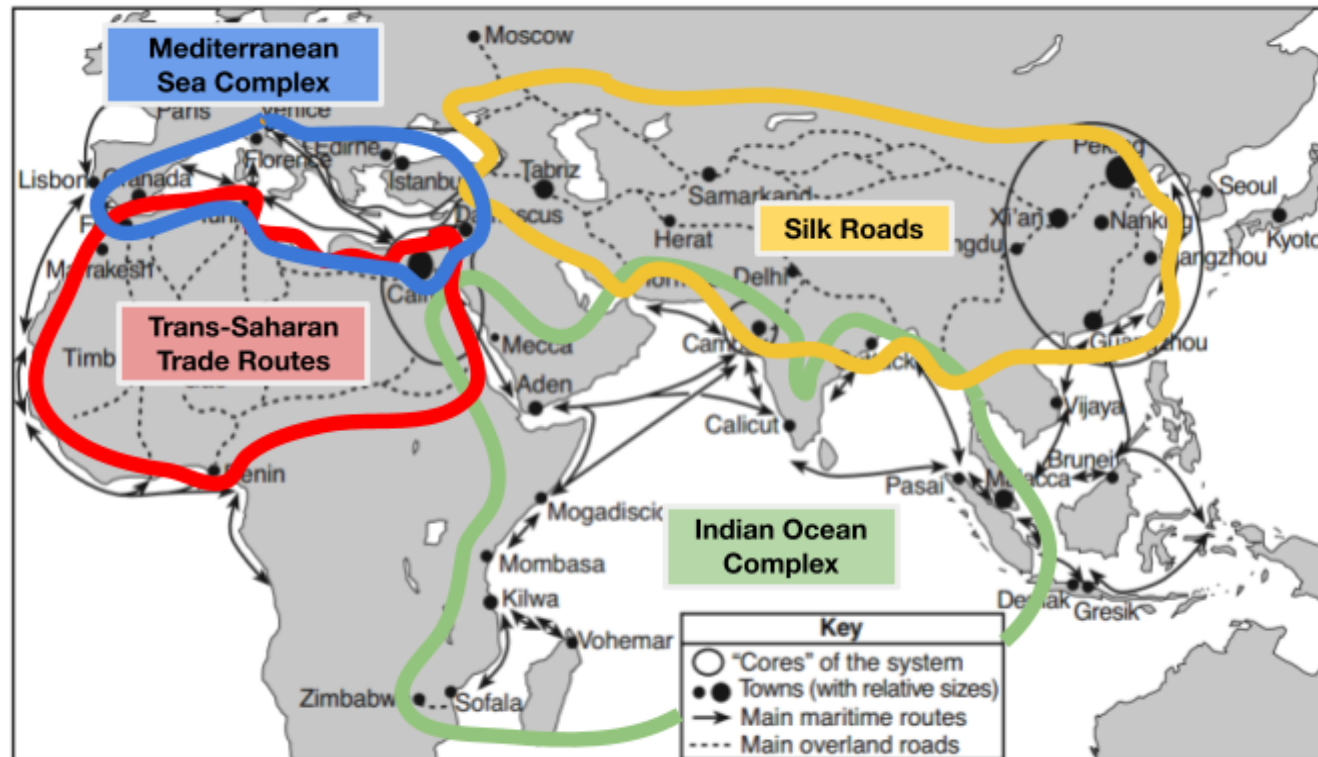
- Describe the location of the Mediterranean Sea complex.



Think Like a Geographer

Introduction: Where was the Mediterranean Sea Complex located?

➔ **Directions:** Examine the map below and answer the questions that follow.



Source: Adapted from 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.

Which continents are connected through the Mediterranean Sea Complex?

What was traded in the Mediterranean Sea complex?

Objective:

- **Identify** what was traded in the Mediterranean Sea complex and explain how this trade route was connected to the the Silk Road.

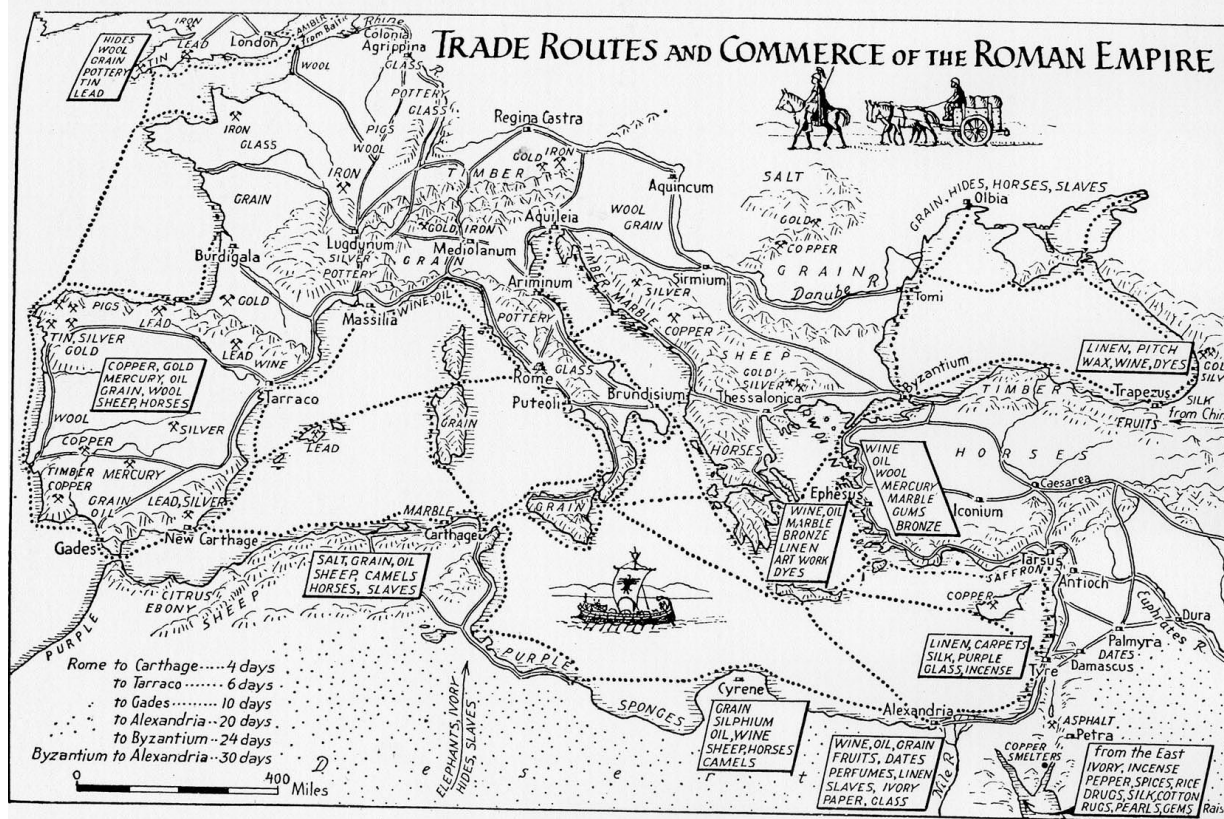


Think Like a Geographer



Contextualize

➔ **Directions:** Examine the map below and answer the questions that follow.



Map 2 The Black Sea and Mediterranean slave trade. From Charles Alexander Robinson, Jr., *Ancient History: From Prehistoric Times to the Death of Justinian* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1951), p. 565. Copyright © 1951 by the Macmillan Co.

<http://www.virginia.edu/woodson/courses/aas-hius365/maps/black-sea-mediterranean-trade1.jpg>

1. Identify three commodities that were traded in the Mediterranean Sea complex that originated in Europe.

2. Where were the sources of slaves in the Mediterranean Sea complex?

3. Where did the pepper and spices that were traded in the Mediterranean Sea complex come from?

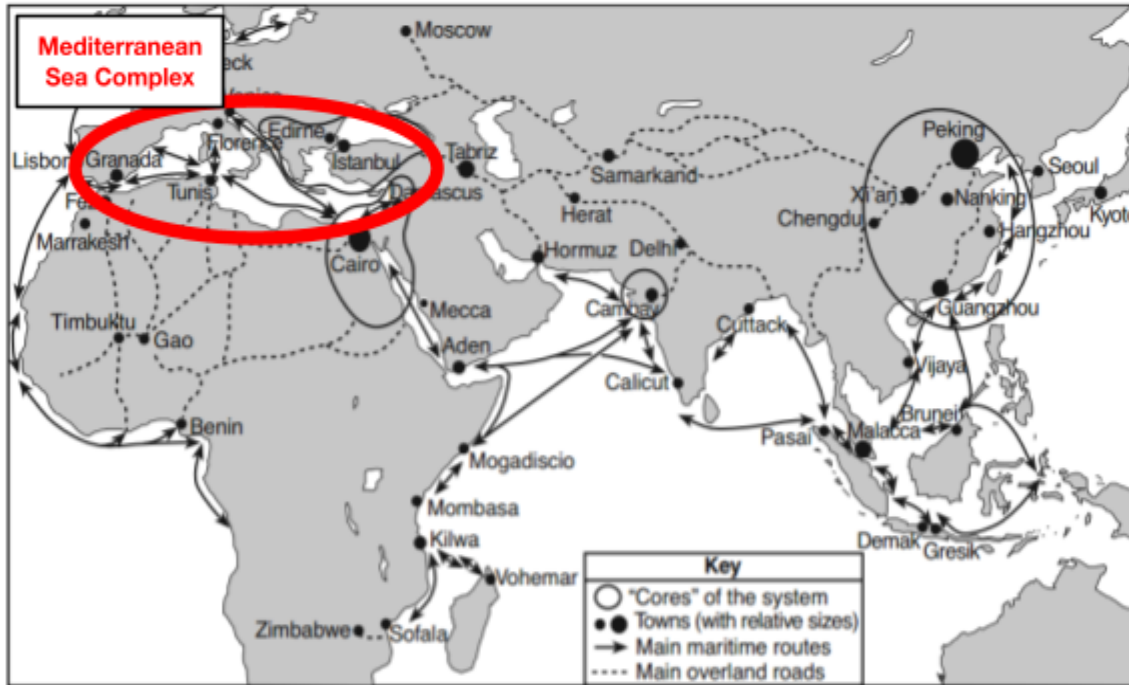


Think Like a Geographer



Contextualize

➔ **Directions:** Examine the maps below and answer the questions that follow.



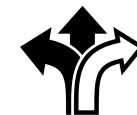
Source: Philippe Beaujard in "The Indian Ocean in Eurasian and African World-Systems before the Sixteenth Century," Journal of World History (adapted) from the NYS Global History and Geography Regents Examination, August 2012

Classical Civilizations in 200 CE



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

1. Based on the maps to the left, which civilizations did the Romans have contact with through trade around 200 CE?



Predict

2. How do you think this connection affected the lives of Romans and those who lived in the other civilizations?

What effect did this transregional trade have on the Roman Empire?

Objective:

- **Explain** the effects that transregional trade had on the Roman Empire.



How did Silk from China Affect Trade in Rome?

Contextualize

➔ **Directions:** Read the text below and answer the questions that follow.

Where did silk spread? Why?

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 lay people 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

What impact did Silk have in Rome?

Quick Facts About The Impact of the Silk Trade on Rome

- "[B]y 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/

1. Why was silk in demand in Europe and other parts of Asia?

2. What impact did the sale of silk have on Roman society?



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

Slavery and the Slave Trade in Rome

➔ **Directions:** Read the text below and answer the questions that follow.

Slavery was an ever-present feature of the Roman world. Slaves served in households, agriculture, mines, the military, manufacturing workshops, construction and a wide range of services within the city. As many as 1 in 3 people in Italy and 1 in 5 people across the empire were slaves, and upon this foundation of forced labor was built the entire Roman state and society.

ORIGIN OF SLAVES IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Aside from the huge numbers of slaves taken as war captives (e.g. 75,000 from the First Punic War alone), slaves were also acquired via piracy, trade, robbery and reproduction (a child born to a slave mother (*vernae*) automatically became a slave irrespective of who the father was). Slave markets existed in most large towns, though, and here, in a public square, slaves were paraded with signs around their necks advertising their virtues for prospective buyers.

THE STATUS OF SLAVES

The number and proportion of slaves in society varied over time and place. For example, in Augustan Italy the figure was as high as 30% while in Roman Egypt slaves made up only 10% of the total population. A more modest Roman business owner, artisan or military veteran might own one or two slaves while for the very wealthy, the number of slaves owned could run into the hundreds. For example, in the 1st century CE, the prefect L. Pedanius Secundus had 400 slaves merely for his private residence.



Roman mosaic from Dougga, Tunisia (2nd century CE): the two slaves carrying wine jars wear typical slave clothing and an amulet against the evil eye on a necklace; the slave boy to the left carries water and towels, and the one on the right a bough and a basket of flowers:

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaïque_echansons_Bardo.jpg

1. How were people enslaved in the Roman world?

Slaves were the lowest class of society and even freed criminals had more rights. Slaves had no rights at all in fact and certainly no legal status or individuality. They could not create relations or families, nor could they own property. For all intents and purposes, they were merely the property of a particular owner, just like any other piece of property - a building, a chair or a vase - the only difference was that they could speak. Slaves were, for many of the Roman elite, a status symbol and, therefore, the more slaves one had, the better. Wealthy Romans very often appeared in public accompanied by an entourage of as many as 15 slaves.

2. What rights did slaves have in Roman society?

THE ROLES OF SLAVES

Slaves were employed by private individuals or the state and worked in agriculture (especially the grain, vine and olive sectors), in mines (especially for gold and silver), manufacturing industries, transportation, education (where they brought their specialist knowledge of such topics as philosophy and medicine to the Roman world), the military (principally as baggage porters and camp assistants), the service industries (from food to accounting), in the private home, in the construction industry, on road-building projects, in public baths, and even to perform tasks in certain cult rituals.

3. What jobs did slaves perform in Rome?



Mosaic depicting two female slaves (*ancillae*) attending their mistress.

Source: https://arvelhaedka.spvku/Elm/Carthago_museum_rosser_1.jpg

WINNING FREEDOM

There was, at least for a small minority, the possibility of a slave achieving freedom to become a freedman or woman, and this incentive was fully exploited by slave owners. Freedom could be granted by the owner but in most cases was actually bought by the slaves themselves. Freedom could be absolute or might be limited and include certain obligations to the former owner such as inheritance rights or the payment of a portion (*statuliber*) of their earned assets (*peculium*).

Children of a freed woman would not have any limits on their rights (although social status might be affected in terms of reputation). Also, former slaves could become citizens (especially from the Augustan period) and even become slave owners themselves. One famous example was the freedman C. Caecilius Isidorus who would eventually own over 4,000 slaves. This prize of freedom and integration back into society was also used by owners and authority to convince slaves of the benefits of working hard and being obedient.

4. How could a slave be freed?

SLAVE REBELLIONS

Treatises were written advising the best methods of managing slaves - what food and clothing was best, which were the most efficient methods of motivation (e.g. giving time off or better food rations), and how to create divisions amongst slaves so that they did not form dangerous protest groups. Sometimes, however, these careful plans and strategies proved ineffective and slaves turned against their owners. Undoubtedly, the most famous examples of such uprisings were those led by Eunus in Sicily in 135 BCE and Spartacus in southern Italy in 73 BCE, but slaves could protest against their lot in life in much more subtle ways such as working more slowly, stealing, truancy, and sabotage. The case of Spartacus, then, was an unusual but spectacular one. It was not an attempt to overthrow the entire system of slavery but rather the actions of a disaffected group willing to take the risk to fight for their own freedom. Spartacus was a Thracian gladiator who had served in the Roman army and he became the leader of a slave rebellion beginning at the gladiator school of Capua. Supplementing their numbers with slaves from the surrounding countryside (and even some free labourers) an army was assembled which numbered between 70,000 and 120,000. Amazingly, the slave army successively defeated two Roman armies in 73 BCE. Then in 72 BCE Spartacus defeated both consuls and fought his way to Cisalpine Gaul. It may have been Spartacus' intention to disperse at this point but with his commanders preferring to continue to ravage Italy, he once more moved south. More victories followed but, let down by pirates who had promised him transportation to Sicily, the rebellion was finally crushed by Marcus Licinius Crassus at Lucania in 71 BCE. Spartacus fell in the battle and the survivors, 6,000 of them, were crucified in a forceful message to all Roman slaves that any chance of winning freedom through violence was futile.

Source: Adapted from Mark Cartwright, "Slavery in the Roman World," *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, last modified November 01, 2013, <http://www.ancient.eu/article/629/>.

FA

SQ 21: What was the Mediterranean Sea Complex? How did the Mediterranean Sea Complex affect the civilizations connected by it?



Think Like a Geographer



Contextualize

➔ **Directions:** Using evidence from the documents above, respond to the task below in the space provided.

- **Describe the location of the Mediterranean Sea Complex.**
- **Explain how the Mediterranean Sea Complex affected the civilizations connected by it.**