



About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational Report **Page Count:** 24 **Word Count:** 2,061

Book Summary

Marco Polo and the Silk Road is a book about Marco Polo and his fascinating travels to China in the 1200s. Surrounded by controversy, his memoir of travels to mysterious lands became a sensation. Photographs, maps, and illustrations support the text.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Ask and answer questions

Objectives

- Use the reading strategy of asking and answering questions to understand nonfiction text
- Sequence events
- Understand the use of a dash as punctuation
- Identify and use homophones

Materials

Green text indicates resources available on the website

- Book—*Marco Polo and the Silk Road* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- Dictionaries
- **Ask and answer questions, sequence events, dash, homophones worksheets**
- **Discussion cards**



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting book on interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if books are reused.)

Vocabulary

*Bold vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on VocabularyA-Z.com.

• Content words:

Story critical: **authority** (n.), **caravans** (n.), **dynasty** (n.), **foreigners** (n.), **memoir** (n.), **merchants** (n.)
 Enrichment: **ancient** (adj.), **astonished** (v.), **conquest** (n.), **empire** (n.), **famous** (adj.), **journeys** (n.), **mysterious** (adj.), **steppe** (n.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Write the name *Marco Polo* on the board. Ask students to tell what they may already know about the man and where he traveled.
- Explain to students that Marco Polo lived in the 1200s and spent much of his life traveling to places that were considered mysterious to most people. Ask them to tell what they think would cause someone to do this.

Preview the Book

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of the book. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book, author's name, illustrator's name). Point out the glossary and index. Ask volunteers to explain the use of each.

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Ask and answer questions**

- Discuss how asking and answering questions while reading can help readers understand and enjoy reading the information in a book.
- **Think-aloud:** *From what I see on the cover and title page, it appears as though this book is all about the man Marco Polo. The back cover picture shows an illustration of a boat. However, the title includes the phrase and the Silk Road. I'm curious whether the Silk Road was a road on land or a route that boats followed. I also wonder whether the road was called the Silk Road because it was a route people used to get to places that sold silk. Perhaps Marco Polo bought and sold silk and traveled this road often. Before I read, several questions often come to mind about the topic. As I read, I enjoy looking for answers to my questions, which often sparks further curiosities and questions to answer while reading.*
- Create a chart on the board similar to the one on the [ask-and-answer-questions worksheet](#). Introduce and explain the [ask-and-answer-questions worksheet](#) to students. Ask students to tell what about the topic sparks their curiosity. Have them write their questions in the first section on their worksheet. Invite them to share some of their questions and write them on the class chart.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill: **Sequence events**

- Review or explain that stories are generally told in order from beginning to end.
- Model sequencing the main events of the story *The Three Little Pigs*. Write key words about each event in order on the board as you describe them to students.
Think-aloud: *If I want someone to be able to tell the story The Three Little Pigs correctly, they need to include certain events in order. In this story, the first event that happens is that the first little pig builds a house out of straw. Next, the second little pig builds a house out of sticks. Then, the third pig builds a house out of bricks. After that, the wolf blows down the first pig's house. Then, he blows down the second pig's house. Last, he tries to blow down the third pig's house, but he can't.*
- Explain that certain words are often used to explain a sequence of events. Read the list of events on the board to students in order, using words such as *first*, *next*, *then*, and *last*. Ask students to identify these sequencing words from the example.
- Explain that in nonfiction texts, dates or phrases of time are often used to help readers understand the order of events. Write the following events on the board in the order listed: *2002: got glasses; 1996: born; entered kindergarten at age five, first tooth one year later*. Discuss the correct order of events.

Introduce the Vocabulary

- As students preview the book, ask them to talk about what they see in the photographs, maps, and illustrations. Reinforce the vocabulary words they will encounter in the text.
- Explain to students that sometimes they will not find any context clues that define an unfamiliar word. Model how students can use the glossary or a dictionary to locate a word's meaning. Have a volunteer read the definition for *ancient* in the glossary. Have students follow along on page 6 as you read the sentence in which the word *ancient* is found to confirm the meaning of the word.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

Marco Polo and the Silk Road

- Write the word *ancient* on the board. List examples of things that are considered ancient, such as certain books, maps, and articles of clothing. Talk about when things become *ancient* and what constitutes a *very long time ago*. Ask students to give examples of other ancient things they can think of, and list them on the board.
- Have students locate other content vocabulary words in the glossary and text. Read and discuss their definitions as a class.

Set the Purpose

- Encourage students to ask and answer questions while reading. Remind them to also think about the main ideas and details of each section. Ask them to underline in their book important details in each section.

During Reading

Student Reading

- **Guide the reading:** Have students read to the end of page 9. Encourage those who finish early to go back and reread.
- When students have finished reading, have them circle any questions on their ask-and-answer-questions worksheet that were answered.
- Model answering a question and filling in the second section of the chart on the board.
Think-aloud: *Before I read, more than one question came to mind about this book. I was curious whether the Silk Road was a road on land or a route that boats followed. I also wondered whether the road was called the Silk Road because it was a route people used to get to places that sold silk, and whether Marco Polo bought and sold silk along this road. While reading, I happened to answer some of these questions. I found out that the Silk Road was several land routes people traveled to get to China from the Middle East and Europe. People went to China to trade for desirable products such as pottery, jade, and silk. Since silk was the most desired, the road became known as the Silk Road. I still don't know whether Marco Polo traded for silk and traveled along the Silk Road. I will write these answers on the chart on the board. The information I read sparked new curiosities about the topic. I found it interesting that the Silk Road became a dangerous route full of bandits. I wonder if that raised the price of goods brought back from China. I also wonder whether Marco Polo traveled the Silk Road during this time and, if so, if he was ever in danger. I will write these questions on the chart.*
- Discuss and circle the events that are the most important to correctly tell the story of Marco Polo's life. (Marco Polo was in prison in 1298; while in prison, he told a writer all about his travels to China; camel caravans transported precious goods to and from Europe and China starting in 200 B.C.; the Silk Road went into serious decline in A.D. 907 and became dangerous to travel; the Mongols conquered China in 1264 and the Silk Road again became safe.)
- Review the circled events on the board. Point out that other information in the book includes details that make the story interesting but are not important to the history of China and Marco Polo's travels there.
- Introduce and explain the [sequence events worksheet](#). Have students write the circled events in order on their worksheet. Point out that the events are not always told in chronological order, so the events first need to be arranged in order by using the dates and other time phrases mentioned in the book. Discuss the correct order and allow students time to make corrections on their worksheet as necessary.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students read to the end of page 11. Have them circle any questions on their ask-and-answer-questions worksheet that were answered. Ask students to write answers to any circled questions and additional questions they raised on their worksheet. Invite them to share the information they learned and the questions they generated while reading.

- Ask students to write additional important story events in order on their sequence events worksheet. Discuss the important events as a class and write them on the board in order. Point out that when using a timeline, events should be added in chronological order, even though the author tells them out of order in the book. (Marco Polo was born in 1254; when he was a baby his father left on a trading journey; when he was 13 his mother died; his father returned to Venice in 1269; Marco, his father, and his uncle prepared immediately for another trip to China.) Allow students to make additions and corrections to their worksheet.
- Have students read the remainder of the book. Remind them to look for and write answers to their questions on their ask-and-answer-questions worksheet. Encourage them to add new questions they might have to their worksheet as they read and underline in their book important information within each section.



Have students make a question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. Encourage them to use the strategies they have learned to read each word and figure out its meaning.

After Reading

- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Reflect on the Reading Strategy

- Reinforce that asking questions before and during reading, and looking for the answers while reading, keeps readers interested in the topic. It also encourages them to keep reading to find answers to their questions and helps them understand and enjoy what they read.
- **Think-aloud:** *I wanted to know if the dangerous journey along the Silk Road caused an increase in prices of goods brought back from China. I also wondered whether Marco Polo traveled the Silk Road during this time and, if so, if he was ever in danger. I learned that Marco traveled to China along the Silk Road with his father and uncle. However, it was during a time when the Silk Road was safe for travelers. I read that they traveled for three and a half years before reaching China. I also learned that they were gone for 24 years, returning to Venice in 1295. I didn't find the answer to my questions about the possible increase in prices on goods from China. I am still curious about this. I'm also curious to know what the trip from China to Venice was like for Marco Polo. I will write the questions I'm still curious about on the ask-and-answer-questions chart.*
- Reinforce that asking questions before and during reading, and looking for the answers while reading, keeps readers interested in the topic. It also encourages them to keep reading to find answers to their questions and helps them understand and enjoy what they have read.
- Point out to students that all of their questions may not have been answered in this text. Brainstorm other sources they might use to locate additional information to answer their questions. Invite students to fill in the last column of their worksheet with information they would still like to know about Marco Polo.
- Ask students to share questions they added to their ask-and-answer-questions worksheet while reading.

Reflect on the Comprehension Skill

- **Discussion:** Review the sequence of events that students wrote on their worksheet using sequencing words (*first, next, then, after that*, and so on). Point out how they used their own words to write about each event.
- **Independent practice:** Have students complete the sequence events worksheet by identifying the remaining important events of the story. If time allows, discuss their answers.
- **Enduring understanding:** In this book, you learned about Marco Polo and some of the experiences he had in China. Many people think that he lied about his travels because he didn't include some important facts. Now that you know this information, why do you think it's important to include important facts when sharing your personal experiences?

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: Dash

- Review or explain that a dash (—) is a punctuation mark used to indicate a break or omission. It is also used to clarify information within a sentence.
- Direct students to page 4 in the book. Write the following sentence on the board: *But after his return, he was a hostage in a war between two Italian cities—Genoa, and his home city, Venice.* Ask students how the dash is used in this instance (to clarify which cities were at war).
- Direct students to page 6. Write the following sentence on the board: *This route—actually several interconnecting routes—stretched about 4,000 miles.* Ask students how the dash is used in this instance (to add a thought to the middle of the sentence).
- Point out to students the difference between a dash and a hyphen. Have students turn to page 6 and locate the word east-west. Review or explain that hyphens are shorter in length than dashes and are used to connect two words, such as in compound adjectives. Tell students that this book also uses a negative sign (-40 degrees) and remind them not to confuse this with a dash or hyphen.



Direct students to page 12 in the book. Write the following sentence on the board: *The travelers planned to sail to China from a port city named Hormuz in the country of Persia—present-day Iran.* Have students circle the dash (after the word *Persia*). Then ask them to write in the margin how the dash is used in this instance (to clarify the country in present-day geography). Discuss their responses. Point out the hyphen in the compound adjective *present-day*.

- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [dash worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their responses.

Word Work: Homophones

- Have students turn to page 10. Read the following sentence aloud: *When Marco was just a baby, the two elder Polos departed on a trading journey.* Have them circle the word *two*. Ask students to explain what the word means (a number greater than one and less than three).
- Have students turn to page 11. Read the following sentence aloud: *Nicolo and Maffeo Polo finally got back to Venice in 1269.* Have them circle the word *to*. Ask students to explain what the word *to* means (a preposition that clarifies location).
- Ask students to identify the words in the two sentences that sound the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings (*two*, *to*). Write these words on the board. Explain to students that words that sound the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings are called *homophones*. Repeat the process for *there* (page 11: *There, they met Kublai Khan.*) and *their* (page 11: *During their first trip to China*).
- Invite students to share other homophone pairs they may know. Write these pairs on the board.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the homophones *here* and *hear* on the board. Have students use each word in a sentence on a separate piece of paper. Invite them to share their sentences aloud.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [homophones worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their responses.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, allow partners to take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

Home Connection

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends. Then have them create a timeline of their life with someone at home.

Extend the Reading

Informational Report Writing Connection

Provide additional print and website sources for students to research an historical figure mentioned in the book: Pope Gregory X, Genghis Khan, or Kublai Khan. Have them identify information such as: when and where the individual lived, major achievements, and his influence on history.

Visit [Writing A-Z](#) for a lesson and leveled materials on informational report writing.

Elements of Nonfiction Connection

Discuss the images on pages 9, 13, 15, and 21. Invite students to consider the information presented in the maps, illustrations, and photographs. Discuss the purpose of incorporating these charts (to provide clarification and elaboration of information on nearby pages; to draw conclusions about information presented in the main body of the text). Ask students to explain why it might be beneficial to examine and understand these nonfiction elements in the text as they read.

Skill Review

[Discussion cards](#) covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.
- Have students choose one or more cards and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.
- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can:

- consistently ask relevant questions about a topic prior to and during reading; locate answers to their questions and write them on a worksheet
- accurately sequence events in the text during discussion and on a worksheet
- correctly identify the use of dashes as punctuation; distinguish dashes from hyphens and negative signs during discussion and on a worksheet
- accurately identify and understand the use of homophones during discussion and on a worksheet

Comprehension Checks

- [Book Quiz](#)
- [Retelling Rubric](#)