

Explore More—Trade Routes

Directions: Listen to your teacher talk about the growth of cities and the establishment of trade routes among Asia, Africa, and Europe. You will learn about the products, inventions, and ideas that traveled along these trade routes. You also will hear about the role of merchants in Arab society. Refer to the world map in your Explore Geography Picture Dictionary for geographical reference. Circle any words you don't understand. Underline or highlight important ideas in the text. Write notes in the margins to help you understand key points. Then answer the questions in your own words.

The Growth of Cities and Establishment of Trade Routes

For thousands of years, many people lived as nomads on the Arabian Peninsula.

Point to this area on your map.

They had small herds of goats, sheep, and camel. There also were farmers who lived in the highlands and coastal areas. Merchants and traders lived in the towns. They crossed the desert on trade routes connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe. They traveled across the desert in camel caravans, stopping at oases for food, water, shade, and rest. They also stopped to trade goods with the nomads and other traders and merchants. The desert oases on these trade routes developed into some of the first Arabian towns. Muslim traders met in busy port cities on the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. They also traveled to Baghdad and other Muslim cities in the Middle East as well as to African centers of commerce.

Point to these bodies of water and areas on your map

The routes they traveled became established trade routes that traders followed year after year. One historian said that by uniting the Mediterranean world with Arabia and India, Muslims “created the greatest trade network ever seen.”*

The Products, Inventions, and Ideas that Traveled Along the Trade Routes

Many products, inventions, and ideas traveled along these trade routes. Merchants had a huge number of products to choose from, including spices,

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* Mark Kishlansky, Patrick Geary, and Patricia O'Brien. *Civilization in the West*, Fourth Edition, Vol. 1. New York: Longman, p. 230.

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paper, silk, and horses from China; silver and cotton from India; iron, textiles, and woven carpets from Persia; and gold from West Africa. Merchants also could find slaves, glassware, leather, perfume, pearls, exotic foods, and cloth in these bustling markets.

Point to these areas on your map

Of course, products were not the only things traded in these marketplaces. People learned about new inventions such as steel. They learned about hydraulics, advanced irrigation systems, and more scientific agricultural information to improve the crop yield. People also learned about new crops, and new developments in medicine, mathematics, and astronomy.

The Role of Merchants in Arab Society

Muhammad, the man who established the religion of Islam, was a merchant. Commerce was an important part of Arab society and merchants were important members of that society. They brought new ideas and new goods to make life better. In time, Muslims created a banking system to support the commerce. People could buy and sell goods on credit. This meant buyers could pay for goods at a later time. ❖

YOUR TURN!

Write your answers to the following questions.

1. Describe the growth of cities and establishment of trade routes among Asia, Africa, and Europe.

2. What products, inventions, and ideas traveled along these trade routes?

3. Describe the role of merchants in Arab society.

Questions for further discussion:

- Refer to your textbook and *Explore Geography Picture Dictionary*. Identify and discuss the physical and cultural features that explained the growth of economic systems in the Muslim world.
- Interpret and discuss the basic indicators of economic performance and conduct cost-benefit analyses of economic and political issues related to the establishment of trade routes.