

The Silk Road

This sample task contains a set of primary and authentic sources about the impact of geography on the development of civilization in Ancient Egypt.

Alignment

The questions in this task align to the following social studies grade-level expectations.

6.4.2 Explain how world migration patterns and cultural diffusion influenced human settlement

6.6.3 Describe the connection between physical geography and its influence on the development of civilization

Contents

This sample task contains the following sections:

- [Primary and Authentic Sources](#)
- [Assessment Items](#)
- [Extended-Response Task](#)
- [Scoring Rubric](#)
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- [Printable Student Version](#)

Task Directions

- Teachers may choose to use or modify this sample as part of an instructional lesson or as a formative or summative assessment.
- Teachers should provide students access to the printable student version of the task items, which excludes GLE alignment, answer keys, and scoring information.
- Students should then read or review the sources and answer the questions.
- For additional specifications about the task, please see the [Assessment Guidance](#) for grade 6.

Primary and Authentic Sources

Read and study Sources 1 through 4 about the Silk Road. As you read, you may take notes in the space next to the sources or on page 5 in this answer document. Then use the sources to answer questions 1 through 5.

Source 1: [Silk Road video](#)

Source 2: Silk Road maps

- <http://www.mitchellteachers.org/ChinaTour/SilkRoadProject/pdf/physicalmapofasia.pdf>
- <http://www.mitchellteachers.org/ChinaTour/SilkRoadProject/images/maps/phygeomapsilkroad.jpg>
- http://www.mitchellteachers.org/ChinaTour/SilkRoadProject/pdf/Silk%20Road%20Wall%20Map_color.pdf

Source 3: [Silk Road maps and timeline](#)

Source 4: [Silk Road Virtual Tour](#)

Item 1: Multiple Select

Which of these physical features hindered early trade and played a role in the establishment of the network of trade routes known as the Silk Road? Select the **two** correct answers.

- A. oceans
- B. deserts
- C. plains
- D. rivers
- E. mountains

Item 2: Multiple Select

According to Source 1, which of the statements below is true of the importance of the Silk Road? Select the **two** correct answers.

- A. The Silk Road was developed in response to demand for exotic goods.
- B. The Silk Road emerged as a single land route that extended across Eurasia.
- C. The Silk Road was created at the request of Alexander the Great.
- D. The Silk Road withstood the rise and fall of multiple civilizations.
- E. The Silk Road emerged as a means to defeat nomadic groups.

Item 3: Multiple Select

Which of these items were thought to be transferred from China via the Silk Road? Select the **two** correct answers.

- A. glassware
- B. gun powder
- C. crossbow
- D. gold
- E. horses

Item 4: Multiple Choice

According to Source 1, what eventually led to the downfall of the Silk Road?

- A. the exchange of maritime technology
- B. the rise of new civilizations
- C. the fall of old civilizations
- D. the exchange of religious ideas

Item 5: Extended Response

Write a well-organized response on the lines provided on pages 5 and 6 in this answer document.

Explain how the Silk Road contributed to the economic and cultural development of Asia prior to 1500.

As you write, follow the directions below.

- Address all parts of the prompt.
- Include information and examples from your own knowledge of social studies.
- Use evidence from the sources to support your response.
- Follow the steps on the Checklist as you write your response.

Use page 4 in this answer document for notes and planning. Write your **final response** on pages 5 and 6 in this answer document.

Remember: The prewriting activities on page 4 will not be scored. Only your response on pages 5 and 6 will be scored.

Scoring Rubric

The response should be scored **holistically** on its adherence to two dimensions: Content and Claims. Each response should be given the score that corresponds to the set of bulleted descriptors that **best** describes the response.

Dimension: Content	
Score	Description
4	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects thorough knowledge of the economic and cultural impact of the Silk Road by incorporating ample, focused factual information from prior knowledge and the sources; • Contains accurate understandings with no errors significant enough to detract from the overall content of the response; • Fully addresses all parts of the prompt.
3	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects general knowledge of the economic and cultural impact of the Silk Road by incorporating adequate factual information from prior knowledge and the sources; • Contains mostly accurate understandings with minimal errors that do not substantially detract from the overall content of the response; • Addresses all parts of the prompt.
2	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects limited knowledge of the economic and cultural impact of the Silk Road by incorporating some factual information from prior knowledge and the sources; • Contains some accurate understandings with a few errors that detract from the overall content of the response; • Addresses part of the prompt.
1	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects minimal knowledge of the economic and cultural impact of the Silk Road by incorporating little or no factual information from prior knowledge and the sources; • Contains few accurate understandings with several errors that detract from the overall content of the response; • Minimally addresses part of the prompt.
0	The student's response is blank, incorrect, or does not address the prompt.

Dimension: Claims

Score	Description
4	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a valid claim that effectively expresses a solid understanding of the topic; • Thoroughly supports the claim with well-chosen evidence from the sources; • Provides a logically organized, cohesive, and in-depth explanation of the connections, patterns, and trends among ideas, people, events, and/or contexts within or across time and place.
3	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a relevant claim that expresses a general understanding of the topic; • Supports the claim with sufficient evidence from the sources; • Provides an organized explanation of the connections, patterns, and trends among ideas, people, events, and/or contexts within or across time and place.
2	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents an inadequate claim which expresses a limited understanding of the topic. • Includes insufficient support for the claim but does use some evidence from the sources; • Provides a weak explanation of the connections, patterns, and trends among ideas, people, events, and/or contexts within or across time and place.
1	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not develop a claim but provides evidence that relates to the topic; OR develops a substantially flawed claim with little or no evidence from the sources; • Provides a vague, unclear, or illogical explanation of the connections among ideas, people, events, and/or contexts within or across time and place.
0	<p>The student's response is blank, incorrect, or does not address the prompt.</p>

Scoring Notes for Claims Rubric

A response that develops a **valid** claim expresses a **solid** understanding of the social studies topic. The response is supported by **ample and well-chosen** evidence from the sources. The explanation is logical, organized, and cohesive, as demonstrated by connections, patterns, or trends among ideas, people, events, and contexts within or across time and place. A **valid** claim shows a deep understanding of the complexity of social studies themes that is supported by convincing evidence. The analysis may include the ability to discuss cause-and-effect relationships; analyze the importance of and connection between source documents; classify patterns of continuity and change; evaluate differing perspectives; provide in-depth interpretations of historical events, etc.

A response that develops a **relevant** claim expresses a **general** understanding of the social studies topic. The response is supported by **sufficient** evidence from the sources. The explanation is organized and includes connections, patterns, or trends among ideas, people, events, and contexts within or across time and place but fails to reach the valid level. A **relevant** claim shows an accurate understanding of social studies themes but is less complex and includes more generalized evidence. The explanation may identify cause-and-effect relationships; describe patterns of continuity or change; recognize perspectives on a single topic or theme; identify the importance of or connection between source documents; provide general interpretations of historical events, etc.

A response that includes an **inadequate** claim expresses a **limited** understanding of the social studies topic and uses insufficient evidence from the sources to develop the claim. The explanation includes weak connections, patterns, or trends among ideas, people, events, and contexts within or across time and place. An **inadequate** claim shows some understanding of social studies themes but is limited in its analysis and evidence. The explanation may include insufficient understanding of cause and effect relationships; little recognition of patterns of continuity or change; limited knowledge of perspectives on a single topic or theme; misconceptions regarding the importance of or connections between source documents; limited interpretation of historical events, etc.

A response that develops a **substantially flawed** claim expresses **little** understanding of the social studies topic. The explanation, if present, may include vague or illogical connections, patterns, or trends among ideas, people, events, and contexts within or across time and place. It fails to reach the inadequate level for a variety of reasons. For example, the response may provide some evidence that relates to the topic, but is ineffective in supporting a claim, if one is made.

Characteristics of a Strong Response

A strong response is logically organized into several paragraphs. Any errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, or capitalization do not interfere with the ability of the reader to understand the ideas presented.

A strong response may develop one or more lines of reasoning to support the claim. Here are some examples.

- The Silk Road was an extensive network of trade routes that connected China, Western Asia, and Europe. Because of the vast distance covered by the network and the numerous stops along the way, the Silk Road had an extensive impact on the economic development of Asia. Through trade, countries such as China were able to strengthen their economies by trading with other empires throughout Eurasia. Luxury items such as silk and jade were in high demand, so they were able to acquire wealth in the form of gold and other commodities that they traded for along the Silk Road.
- The Silk Road covered a vast expanse of territory. As people engaged in trade, they also established trading posts that became cultural crossroads. Some of the ideas exchanged along the trade routes included printing techniques, gunpowder, magnetic compass, and the stirrup. Additionally, the spread of languages often occurred as merchants learned ways to communicate with those with whom they were trading.

Another impact of this exchange of ideas, often referred to as cultural diffusion, was the exchange of religious beliefs. Buddhism and Hinduism, for example, saw dramatic expansion in the areas in which people practiced these faiths as a result of the Silk Road.

A strong response shows understanding of the topic by analyzing the required sources and including well-chosen evidence from the sources, such as:

- The Silk Road trade network established contact across continents which led to the exchange of goods, ideas, and languages. As people engaged in trade, they also established trading posts that became cultural crossroads. Some of the ideas exchanged along the trade routes included printing techniques, gunpowder, magnetic compass, and the stirrup. (Source 1 and Source 4)
- Geographic barriers hindered travel and trade prior to the establishment of the Silk Road trade routes. Multiple civilizations were isolated by mountains and deserts making trade next to impossible. (Source 2)
- Trade routes emerged over time. As different leaders came to power, additional routes were added to the network. Despite the rise and fall of civilizations, the Silk Road networks continued. (Source 3)
- The Silk Road was named for one of the commodities trade along its route: Chinese silk. There were many other commodities traded along these routes. Specific commodities were traded from different stops along the Silk Road. China traded goods such as silk and jade to get other goods such as gold and Roman glassware. (Source 1 and Source 4)

A strong response also includes important information beyond what is presented in the sources, such as:

- Describing how trade contributes to the development of a civilization. Trade is an effective method of profiting from the goods you are able to produce while obtaining other goods that are not available where you live. For example, China has a luxury item like silk that is not available in other parts of the world; they can then use the demand for that commodity as the basis for trade and obtain items such as gold in return. By engaging in trade, many countries form alliances that encourage cooperation over conflict.
- Describing how cultural diffusion impacts people. As people come in contact with others who are different from themselves, they are exposed to various cultural elements of the other society. Aspects of culture such as language, food, and religion are often exchanged as people engage in trade relationships. As new cultural elements are introduced, people are often impacted as those elements are integrated into their society. This can even be seen today as kids in the U.S. watch anime while Japanese children wear American-style clothing.

**Printable
Student Version**

***Note: Some sources are available only in digital format. A link is provided and will require the use of a computer to view the source.**

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(This page will not be scored.)

