## Crash Course in World History #9: The Silk Road and Ancient Trade

**Key Concept 3.1. Expansion and Intensification of Communication and Exchange Networks**

Although Afro-Eurasia and the Americas remained separate from one another, this era witnessed a deepening and widening of old and new networks of human interaction within and across regions. The results were unprecedented concentrations of wealth and the intensification of cross-cultural exchanges. Innovations in transportation, state policies, and mercantile practices contributed to the expansion and development of commercial networks, which in turn served as conduits for cultural, technological, and biological diffusion within and between various societies. Pastoral or nomadic groups played a key role in creating and sustaining these networks. Expanding networks fostered greater interregional borrowing, while at the same time sustaining regional diversity. The prophet Muhammad promoted Islam, a new major monotheistic religion at the start of this period. It spread quickly through practices of trade, warfare, and diffusion characteristic of this period.

**I. Improved transportation technologies and commercial practices led to an increased volume of trade, and expanded the geographical range of existing and newly active trade networks.**

**A. Existing trade routes flourished and promoted the growth of powerful new trading cities.**

**Required examples of existing trade routes:**

* **The Silk Roads**
* **The Mediterranean Sea**
* **The Trans-Saharan**
* **The Indian Ocean basins**

**B. New trade routes centering on Mesoamerica and the Andes developed.**

**C. The growth of interregional trade in luxury goods was encouraged by significant innovations in previously existing transportation and commercial technologies, including more sophisticated caravan organization; use of the compass, astrolabe, and larger ship designs in sea travel; and new forms of credit and monetization.**

**D. Commercial growth was also facilitated by state practices, trading organizations, and state-sponsored commercial infrastructures like the Grand Canal in China.**

**E. The expansion of empires facilitated Trans-Eurasian trade and communication as new peoples were drawn into their conquerors’ economies and trade networks.**

**Required examples of empires:**

* **China**
* **The Byzantine Empire**
* **The Caliphates**
* **The Mongols**

**II. The movement of peoples caused environmental and linguistic effects.**

**A. The expansion and intensification of long-distance trade routes often depended on environmental knowledge and technological adaptations to it.**

**B. Some migrations had a significant environmental impact.**

**Required examples of migration and their environmental impact:**

**• The migration of Bantu-speaking peoples who facilitated transmission of iron technologies and agricultural techniques in Sub-Saharan Africa**

**• The maritime migrations of the Polynesian peoples who cultivated transplanted foods and domesticated animals as they moved to new islands**

**C. Some migrations and commercial contacts led to the diffusion of languages throughout a new region or the emergence of new languages.**

**III. Cross-cultural exchanges were fostered by the intensification of existing, or the creation of new, networks of trade and communication.**

**A. Islam, based on the revelations of the prophet Muhammad, developed in the Arabian peninsula. The beliefs and practices of Islam reflected interactions among Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians with the local Arabian peoples. Muslim rule expanded to many parts of Afro-Eurasia due to military expansion, and Islam subsequently expanded through the activities of merchants and missionaries.**

**B. In key places along important trade routes, merchants set up diasporic communities where they introduced their own cultural traditions into the indigenous culture.**

**C. The writings of certain interregional travelers illustrate both the extent and the limitations of intercultural knowledge and understanding.**

**D. Increased cross-cultural interactions resulted in the diffusion of literary, artistic, and cultural traditions.**

**E. Increased cross-cultural interactions also resulted in the diffusion of scientific and technological traditions.**

**IV. There was continued diffusion of crops and pathogens throughout the Eastern Hemisphere along the trade routes.**

**A. New foods and agricultural techniques were adopted in populated areas.**

**B. The spread of epidemic diseases, including the Black Death, followed the well established paths of trade and military conquest.**

**Key Concept 3.1 Expansion and Intensification of Communication and Exchange**

**Networks Focus Questions**

* *How did trade networks in the post-Classical Era compare to the Classical Era?*
* *What new technologies, governmental policies, and merchant activities accompanied these developments?*
* *What role did pastoral and nomadic groups play in these trade networks?*
* *How did the physical size of post-Classical trade networks compare to the previous era?*
* *What Classical era trade networks continued during the post-classical era, and which new cities were added during the post-Classical era?*
* *What new technologies enabled the growth of inter-regional trade networks?*
* *What factors encouraged commercial growth in the post-classical era?*
* *How did trans-Eurasian trade as a whole develop during the post-Classical era?*
* *What were the effects of migration in the post-classical era?*
* *What basic understandings of environment and technology did post-classical traders need to conduct their business?*
* *What were the environmental effects of migration in the post-classical era?*
* *What were the linguistic effects of migration in the post-classical era?*
* *How did trade networks as a whole develop in the post-classical era?*
* *Why and where did Muslim trade networks change in the post-classical era?*
* *What institutions did merchants create to foster both trade and cultural diffusion in the postclassical era?*
* *How well did post-classical societies know and understand each other?*
* *How did post-classical trade affect the diffusion of literary, artistic, and cultural traditions?*
* *How did post-classical trade affect the diffusion of scientific and technological traditions?*
* *What were the biological effects of post-classical trade?*
* *What new foods, crops, and agricultural practices diffused in the post-classical era?*
* *What diseases and pathogens also spread via post-classical trade networks?*

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**Video Questions**

**Pre-Video**

1. Take a moment to look at some items you are wearing or have with you and write down where 3-5 of them are from. What does that tell you about the nature of our economic world today?

**During Video (you will have to pause it to answer these well)**

1. What is the point of the t-shirt ramble? Why would John Green spend so much time describing a t-shirt? What clue does that give you about the point of this video?
2. John Green says that the changes merchants made \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. If the Silk Road wasn’t a road, what was it and why was it called the Silk Road?
4. How is it possible that the goods on the Silk Road traveled more than the people who traded on them?
5. Explain how that could lead to much higher prices at the final destination of the goods.
6. What was silk used for in China?
7. What was it used for elsewhere and why? Why wouldn’t they use it for some of the things the Chinese did?
8. What were some of the other major goods traded along the Silk Road and where were they from?

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| Geographic area | Major exports |
| Mediterranean |  |
| China |  |
| India |  |
| East Africa |  |
| Arabia |  |

1. Why would Nomadic people become more important to World History?
2. What empire became a huge hub for Silk Road trade and why?
3. Why did new cities developed by nomads become important, which example does John Green give and why does he say it’s important?
4. John Green uses Rome’s failed attempt to ban silk to demonstrate how wealth shaped governments🡪 Explain how the development of the merchant class opened up doors for people to become wealthy and how it shaped the relationship between wealth and politics.
5. John Green gives three reasons why the Silk Road affected “the rest of us.” Fill in and explain the reasons and outcomes.
   1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_- How was labor force changed?
   2. Trading ideas- Explain how Buddhism evolved and spread. Explain how trade benefitted from Buddhism and vice-versa
   3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_- Explain the impact of disease.

**Post-video (answer these on a blank sheet of paper)**

1. Looking at John Green’s statement in #3, do you agree with him? Why or why not? Give specific examples to back up your decision.
2. How does modern globalization offer both promises and threats to our society?
3. Compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages of modern globalization with those occurring during the pinnacle of the Silk Road.