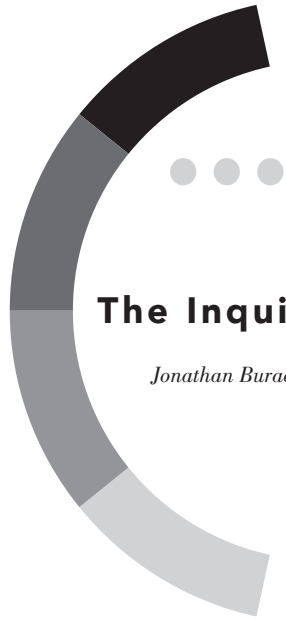


# The Age of Faith



## **The Inquiry Arc** in U.S. History

*Jonathan Burack*

## **Nomads of the Steppes**

**MindSparks®**

CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

HS11121E v1.0

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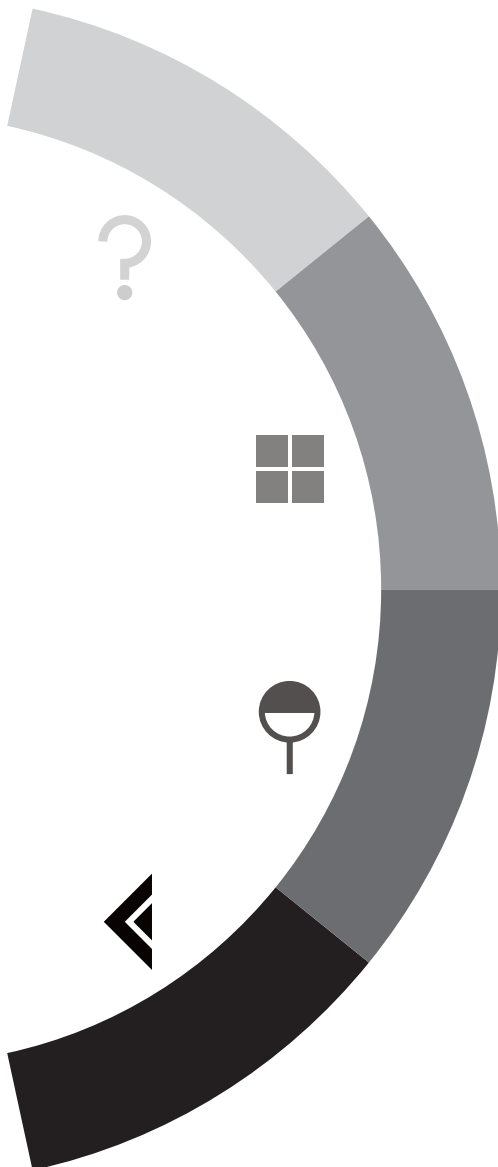
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### C3 Framework

This book is based primarily on the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies Standards. This C3 Framework is an effective tool offering guidance and support for rigorous student learning. The assignments encourage students to be active participants in learning and to explore the parts of history that they find most compelling. Central to the C3 Framework and our use of it is its Inquiry Arc—a set of four interrelated dimensions of informed inquiry in social studies. The lessons in this book are based on all four dimensions of the C3 Inquiry Arc. While the C3 Framework analyzes each of the four dimensions separately, they are not entirely separable in practice—they each interact in dynamic ways. As a result, the lessons combine some or all of the dimensions in various ways.



### Four Dimensions of the Inquiry Arc

#### 1 Developing compelling and supporting questions and planning inquiries

Questions shape social studies inquiries, giving them broader meaning and motivating students to master content and engage actively in the learning process.

#### 2 Applying disciplinary concepts and tools

These are the concepts and central ideas needed to address the compelling and supporting questions students pose. The C3 Framework stresses four subject fields: history, civics, economics, and geography. Each lesson addresses all of these disciplines.

#### Evaluating sources and using evidence

- 3 The purpose of using primary and secondary sources as evidence is to support claims and counterclaims. By assessing the validity and usefulness of sources, including those that conflict with one another, students are able to construct evidence-based explanations and arguments.

#### 4 Communicating conclusions and taking informed action

While this may take the form of individual essays and other writing assignments, these lessons stress other kinds of individual and collaborative forms of communication, including debates, policy analyses, video productions, diary entries, and interviews. Meaningful forms of individual or collaborative civic action are also incorporated into each lessons.

## **How to Use This Book**

This book offers you the chance to implement the entire C3 Inquiry Arc in brief, carefully structured lessons on important topics in world history. Each lesson is driven by a central compelling question, and disciplinary supporting questions are provided. Each lesson asks students to apply understandings from all of the C3 disciplines—history, civics, economics, and geography—and each lesson includes individual and group tasks in an integrated way.

Each lesson also includes an introductory essay, detailed teaching instructions, a set of primary sources, and the handouts needed to implement the lesson's assignments. Rubrics for student evaluation and sources for further study are also provided. The teaching instructions suggest a time frame for completion of each lesson, but the assessments can easily be adapted to fit into any lesson plan.

Each lesson also is aligned with several C3 Framework standards and Common Core State Standards. The College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Literacy emphasize the reading and information texts, making these lessons ideal for integration into English Language Arts instruction.



**C3 Disciplines**



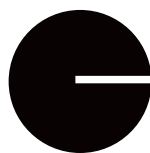
**History**



**Civics**



**Economics**



**Geography**



# Nomads of the Steppes

*What Made Them So Fearsome?*



## Overview

### Introduction

No one knows for sure when tribes of horse-riding pastoral nomads appeared on the vast Eurasian steppe. Some archaeologists believe that people there began using horses as long ago as 4000 BCE. Others think it was as late as 1000 BCE before they truly mastered the use of the horse as a weapon of war. Whenever it was, such horse-riding tribes quickly spread across this vast, treeless land of grass stretching from the edge of Eastern Europe, across Ukraine and parts of Russia, to Central Asia and Mongolia. At times, the nomadic tribes would unite in larger federations. When this happened, their incredible war-fighting abilities terrified the otherwise wealthier and far more populous settled societies around them. At times, small nomad armies conquered and ruled far more complex societies—though usually not for long. How did they have such a fearsome and dramatic impact? That is the compelling question this lesson will focus on. Students will work with ten primary sources that form the core content for tasks that will help them answer the lesson’s compelling question.

### Objectives

Students will work individually and in small groups to respond in a meaningful way to a compelling question about the nomads of the steppe. They will apply discipline-specific background knowledge, use scaffolding, and engage in instructional activities to interpret primary sources before presenting their ideas to the class.

### C3 Standards Addressed by This Lesson

- ◆ **D1.4.6-8.** Explain how the relationship between supporting questions and compelling questions is mutually reinforcing.
- ◆ **D1.5.6-8.** Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of views represented in the sources.
- ◆ **D2.HIS.5.6-8.** Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed over time.
- ◆ **D2.HIS.11.6-8.** Use other historical sources to infer a plausible maker, date, place of origin, and intended audience for historical sources where this information is not easily identified.
- ◆ **D2.HIS.12.6-8.** Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to identify further areas of inquiry and additional sources.
- ◆ **D2.HIS.16.6-8.** Organize applicable evidence into a coherent argument about the past.
- ◆ **D2.ECO.7.6-8.** Analyze the role of innovation and entrepreneurship in a market economy.
- ◆ **D2.GEO.5.6-8.** Analyze the combinations of cultural and environmental characteristics that make places both similar to and different from other places.
- ◆ **D2.GEO.6.6-8.** Explain how the physical and human characteristics of places and regions are connected to human identities and cultures.
- ◆ **D3.1.6-8.** Gather relevant information from multiple sources while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.
- ◆ **D3.2.6-8.** Evaluate the credibility of a source by determining its relevance and intended use.
- ◆ **D3.3.6-8.** Identify evidence that draws information from multiple sources to support claims, noting evidentiary limitations.
- ◆ **D3.4.6-8.** Develop claims and counterclaims while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both.
- ◆ **D4.1.6-8.** Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging the strengths and limitations of the arguments.

- ◆ **D4.3.6-8.** Present adaptations of arguments and explanations on topics of interest to others to reach audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).
- ◆ **D4.6.6-8.** Draw on multiple disciplinary lenses to analyze how a specific problem can manifest itself at local, regional, and global levels over time, identifying its characteristics and causes, and the challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address the problem.

### Common Core Anchor Standards Addressed by This Lesson

- ◆ **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1.** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- ◆ **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2.** Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- ◆ **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6.** Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
- ◆ **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9.** Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
- ◆ **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7.** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- ◆ **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1.** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

## Teaching Instructions

### Compelling Question

What made the nomads of the Eurasian steppes so fearsome?

### Preparation

Provide all students with a copy of the Introductory Essay. Assign this reading as homework. In addition, assign all relevant parts of your course textbook or other basic reading material. Remind students to keep the compelling question for the lesson in mind as they read.



Asking Questions about the Nomads of the Steppes  
*This part of the lesson stresses Dimensions 1 and 2 of the C3 Framework*

### Day One

1. Briefly discuss the Introductory Essay in class and address any initial questions students may have.
2. Distribute the How to Analyze a Primary Source handout. Review each suggestion with the class and remind students to refer to the handout as they read the primary sources in this lesson.
3. Divide the class into four small groups. Each group will focus its work on one of the four basic disciplines identified in Dimension 2 of the C3 Framework—history, civics, economics, or geography. As they work, the groups should keep in mind the unit's overall compelling question. However, for Day One and Day Two, each group will work mainly with a second compelling question—one related specifically to its assigned discipline.
4. Provide each group with one copy of its discipline-specific Assignment Sheet. Give each student a copy of all the primary sources for this unit. Each group may share a primary source packet, if necessary.
5. Have students complete the Day One section of their Assignment Sheets. The objective for Day One is for groups to read three primary sources, and then formulate one supporting question about each of those sources. The supporting questions should be recorded in the spaces provided on the Assignment Sheet.



Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Evaluating Sources and Evidence  
*This part of the lesson stresses Dimensions 2 and 3 of the C3 Framework*

### Day Two

6. Students will return to their previously assigned groups and formulate a claim addressing their group's compelling question. After reading the remaining seven primary sources, they will select one that supports their claim.

7. Using the evidence gathered from primary sources, each group will then prepare a brief (five- to ten-minute) presentation about the nomads from their group's disciplinary perspective. The presentation can be in the form of an oral report, a debate among group members, a PowerPoint, or related type of presentation. Allow time for students to prepare by discussing and debating topics among themselves.

### **Day Three**

8. Each group will deliver its presentation. Allow time for class discussion following each presentation, and for a final effort to answer the central compelling question for the lesson.



#### **Communicating Results and Taking Action**

*This part of the lesson stresses Dimension 4 of the C3 Framework*

Students will complete a final project that expresses an understanding of the topic and responds clearly to the unit's central compelling question. The project may be completed in groups, but students should be evaluated individually.

Distribute the Communicating Results and Taking Action handout and decide whether you will assign the projects or allow students to form groups and choose tasks on their own. Set a reasonable deadline. Students should review the Nomads of the Steppes Rubric so they can understand how their performance will be evaluated. The projects are summarized below.

#### **Communicating Results**

- ◆ Ask students to focus attention on Primary Sources 1.2, 1.4, 1.5., 1.7, and 1.9. These are all descriptions of nomads by writers from settled societies. Ask each student to list some questions they have about the possible accuracy of each of these accounts. They should write a brief paper explaining what they think is most reliable in the accounts and what is least reliable. Share some of these papers in a class discussion about the reliability of these sources.
- ◆ Ask students to pretend that they are merchants in the 1300s. They should read Primary Source 1.10, a passage from Pegolotti's *Merchant Handbook*. Using this and at least two other primary sources, each student should write a journal with four entries. One should be about planning a trip from somewhere in present-day Iran or Turkey to China. Two entries should be about important stops along the way. The final entry should be about arriving in China. The entries should refer specifically to information in Pegolotti's handbook and two other primary sources for this lesson.
- ◆ Nomads were often vastly superior as warriors to the armies of more complex settled societies. Have students write a letter to the emperor of China explaining why these fighters were so fierce and effective. In explaining this to the emperor, the students should refer to the details of at least three of the primary sources for this lesson. Also recommend things the emperor might do to better defend against nomadic armies.



*Taking Action*

- ◆ According to one estimate, out of the earth's estimated population of 7.7 billion people, only 30 million or so lead nomadic migratory lives—for example the Tuareg of northern Africa, the Evenks of northeastern Russia, the Himba of southwestern Africa, the Kuchi of Afghanistan, the Aborigines of Australia, and the Laplanders (a.k.a. Sami) of Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Russia. Separate students into five small groups. Each group should research one of these nomadic peoples or one other modern-day nomadic society of their choice. Have each group prepare a brief presentation on the environment, lifestyle, and challenges facing its nomadic society. Have the groups present their findings to the class. Film these presentations and the discussions about them.
- ◆ Use online video-presentation software to make the video from the previous assignment available online. Use social media to link to and discuss the presentation. Ask those contacted in this way to comment and communicate with others about it. Invite suggestions for how best to help nomadic people adjust to the modern world around them.

## Introductory Essay

# *Nomads of the Steppes*



*Depiction of a Cimmerian tribe from an Etruscan vase*

No one knows for sure when tribes of horse-riding pastoral nomads appeared on the vast Eurasian steppe. Some archaeologists believe people there began using horses as long ago as 4000 BCE. Others think it was as late as 1000 BCE before they truly mastered the use of the horse as a weapon of war. Whenever it was, such horse-riding tribes quickly spread across this huge region. At times, they united into powerful federations of tribes. For a while, such tribal federations would spread terror during one conquest after another. They often gained control of huge swaths of land. Yet they would almost always lose that control just as quickly.

Nomads are defined as people who move from place to place. Simple hunter-gatherer bands are nomads. However, “pastoral nomads” are more complex than hunter-gatherers. Pastoral nomads are those who herd animals. Herding demands skills and involves challenges that are beyond the ability of earlier hunter-gatherer nomads. Pastoral nomads follow a way of life based on managing their herds of cattle, sheep,

goats, and, above all, the horse. The pastoral nomads of the Eurasian steppe inhabited a vast treeless land of grass that stretched from the edge of Eastern Europe, across Ukraine and parts of Russia, to Central Asia and Mongolia. Their herding skills led them to master horse riding and the use of the horse as a formidable weapon of war.

At times, such nomadic tribes would unite in larger federations. When this happened, their incredible war-fighting abilities terrified the otherwise wealthier and far more populous settled societies around them. The names of these nomadic federations—the Xiongnu, the Huns, the Tartars, the Mongols—still arouse fear in many people. They call attention to a way of war that was brutal and murderous on a massive scale.

Even as very young children, Eurasian nomads learned to ride and shoot arrows on horseback. These pastoral nomads did not need a special war-fighting army. The same skills they learned and used as herders also served them as warriors. As a result, every healthy adult was a warrior. This included a substantial number of females. Using a short, powerful bow, these warriors could shoot a continuous stream of arrows as they charged, when they pivoted, and even as they rode away. A key tactic was the feigned retreat. The nomads would first pretend to flee. They fooled their enemies into pursuing them wildly. At the right moment, they would turn and attack all over again against forces now disorganized and unprepared.

The nomads almost always had the military advantage over settled societies. Nevertheless, they rarely took over and controlled such societies, at least not for long. The number of nomads was always very small in relation to the settled societies they attacked. Moreover, the nomads were rarely more than loose collections of individual tribes. The great nomadic federations were usually held together by one highly admired, courageous tribal leader. It was hard to pass on such qualities to others. Hence, alliances of tribes often fell apart after just a few generations of a leader's heirs.

Nomads lacked the complex organized governments of settled societies. Those societies—whether Roman, Arab, Persian, Russian, or Chinese—had long-lasting, highly organized political, military, and economic systems. When nomads did conquer such societies, they had to rely on the local populations to run things. This is why they often quickly adopted settled ways themselves along with all the other cultural traits of the societies they had defeated.

It is also true that nomads often felt a greater need to cooperate with settled peoples than to fight with them. Settled societies had many things the nomads wanted to trade for—metals, grain, clothing, luxury items, and gold. In return, settled societies greatly admired the nomad's horses—or as the Chinese called them, their “heavenly” horses. During peaceful times, nomads kept the vast overland trade networks open. They benefited from the trade themselves since they could tax it and make a profit from it.

Nevertheless, when settled societies cut them off from such trade, nomads were all too ready to resort to raids and larger attacks. Their merciless violence in battle terrorized societies that were far larger, more complex, and richer. The question as to why they were so feared by those around them is not an easy one to answer. This essay suggests some of those reasons. The primary sources in this lesson may suggest others. They are meant to help you discuss, debate, and try to answer this question.



*Ancient coin from the Kushan Empire,  
dating back to the first century*

Image sources: © Shams bahari / CC BY-SA 3.0  
© Ancientcointraders / CC BY-SA 4.0



## History Group

GROUP MEMBERS:

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### *Nomads of the Steppes*

Your group's task is to explore history issues related to the Eurasian nomads. A disciplinary compelling question is provided. You will work from there to develop and answer supporting questions based on primary sources. Follow the steps to complete the task.

#### Day One

1. Review the concept of compelling and supporting questions with your instructor. Briefly, compelling questions focus on meaningful and enduring problems. They ask us to deal with major issues and important ideas. Supporting questions are those that help us answer a compelling question.
2. As a group, briefly discuss the following compelling question:

Nomads were less developed than settled societies. However, for a long time they were superior to them in warfare. Why?

3. Read and discuss Primary Sources 1.4, 1.7, and 1.9.
4. Read and discuss the following background information. Use the information to help complete the handout.

Starting some 3,000 years ago, horse-riding pastoral nomads began to roam the Eurasian steppes in large numbers. They ranged from the Danube basin and Hungary in Europe, to Mongolia and Manchuria in the east. They terrorized settled societies that were often far wealthier than the nomads themselves. The settled societies were well organized states. In good times, their agricultural economies produced large surpluses. Craftsmen, merchants, and many other skilled workers produced many basic goods and luxuries. Yet these societies were often no match when attacked by warriors from much smaller nomadic societies. Why?

Nomads had to live in simple conditions. They moved in regular patterns from winter to summer quarters. This meant they had to take all they owned with them, along with their herds of sheep, horses, and other animals. This limited what they could own. It also limited the size of their communities. There was more to the nomads of the steppe than pillaging. They were in fact among the most ruthless warriors in history.

The skills that boys gained in caring for the tribe's herds were the same ones they needed to become masterful horse-riding warriors. Thus, the entire male population learned to engage in swift attack on horseback, planned retreats, coordinated deceptions, and many other tactics that gave Mongols superiority over the military forces of settled societies.

5. Each group member should develop some supporting questions about the primary sources your group has been asked to discuss. Use the secondary source above to help you think about these questions. Develop supporting questions that will help answer your group's compelling question. As a group, choose one supporting question for each primary source and record those questions here.

Primary Source 1.4

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Primary Source 1.7

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Primary Source 1.9

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## Day Two

6. As a group, make a claim about your compelling question. The claim should be one you can back up with evidence from your assigned sources. This claim is your evidence-based answer to your group's own compelling question. Here is that question again:

Nomads were less developed than settled societies. However, for a long time they were superior to them in warfare. Why?

State your group's claim here:

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7. From the remaining seven primary sources for this lesson, choose one additional source that your group believes can help support or clarify its claim. The source may also be one that challenges this claim in a way that seems important. In the space below, list the source your group chose and briefly state why you chose it.

Source:

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Reason for choosing this source:

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8. Prepare a brief (five- to ten-minute) presentation. Summarize the sources you have used. Discuss the supporting questions you developed. Explain your answer to your group's discipline-based compelling question. Use the space below for notes or to create an outline of your group's presentation.



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GROUP MEMBERS:

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## *Nomads of the Steppes*

Your group's task is to explore the civics issues related to the Eurasian nomads. A compelling question is provided. You will work from there to develop and answer supporting questions based on primary sources. Follow these steps to complete the task.

### Day One

1. Review the concept of compelling and supporting questions with your instructor. Briefly, compelling questions focus on meaningful and enduring problems. They ask us to deal with major issues and important ideas. Supporting questions are those that help us to answer a compelling question.
2. As a group, briefly discuss the following compelling question:

Nomadic tribes had trouble establishing well-organized states that could last. Why do you suppose that was so?

3. Read and discuss Primary Sources 1.2, 1.4, and 1.6.
4. Read and discuss the following background information. Use the information to help complete the handout.

In 1206, Genghis Khan took control of the nomadic tribes of the Mongols. His forces soon began ranging far and wide. They invaded and conquered relentlessly, building up the largest land empire in history. By the middle of the thirteenth century, that empire stretched from Eastern Europe to all of China, from Siberia in the north, into Central Asia and much of what is now the Middle East, to the edge of India. Briefly, the Mongols imposed peace on this vast region. They united it through a great network of trade and the exchanges of ideas.

Genghis Khan's sons inherited his empire and expanded it to its greatest extent. However, that unity did not last long. Genghis's grandsons, their families, and their rival assemblies of tribal chiefs often argued over who should rule. No single system of government ever fully developed. In the late 1200s, the empire split into four separate realms. These realms were often at odds with one another. The Mongols never really imposed a Mongol way of life on the societies they conquered. Perhaps they were too



small in number to do this. They had to rely on the skilled workers and administrators of their subject peoples—and on their ideas and culture. No Mongol religion, language, system of government, or other set of ideas reshaped the societies they took over. Instead, those societies absorbed the Mongols, changed them, and reemerged much as they had been before.

5. Each group member should develop some supporting questions about the primary sources your group has been asked to discuss. Use the secondary source above to help you think about these questions. Develop supporting questions that will help answer your group's compelling question. As a group, choose one supporting question for each primary source and record those questions here.

Primary Source 1.2

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Primary Source 1.4

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Primary Source 1.6

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## **Day Two**

6. As a group, make a claim about your compelling question. The claim should be one you can back up with evidence from your assigned sources. This claim is your evidence-based answer to your group's own compelling question. Here is that question again:

Nomadic tribes had trouble establishing well-organized states that could last. Why do you suppose that was so?

State your group's claim here:

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7. From the remaining seven primary sources for this lesson, choose one additional source that your group believes can help support or clarify its claim. The source may also be one that challenges this claim in a way that seems important. In the space below, list the source your group chose and briefly state why you chose it.

Source:

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Reason for choosing this source:

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8. Prepare a brief (five- to ten-minute) presentation. Summarize the sources you have used. Discuss the supporting questions you developed. Explain your answer to your group's discipline-based compelling question. Use the space below for notes or to create an outline of your group's presentation.



## Economics Group

GROUP MEMBERS:

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### *Nomads of the Steppes*

Your group's task is to explore the economics issues related to the Eurasian nomads. A compelling question is provided. You will work from there to develop and answer supporting questions based on primary sources. Follow these steps to complete the task.

#### Day One

1. Review the concept of compelling and supporting questions with your instructor. Briefly, compelling questions focus on meaningful and enduring problems. They ask us to deal with major issues and important ideas. Supporting questions are those that help us to answer a compelling question.
2. As a group, briefly discuss the following compelling question:

“Nomadic societies often fought with settled societies. Yet the two kinds of societies often also benefited from one another economically.” Explain why you do or do not agree with this statement.
3. Read and discuss Primary Sources 1.2, 1.5, and 1.10.
4. Read and discuss the following background information. Use the information to help complete the handout.

Nomadic pastoralism was not the earliest form of social life on the steppes. First, there were hunters and gatherers. Then some eked out a livelihood through farming along rivers and at oases scattered throughout the region. Only then did the herding of sheep, cattle, and oxen become the chosen lifestyle of the steppes. This was especially so once the horse was tamed, though pastoral nomads often did farm some land as well. However, the nomads lived mainly on the products of their herds: meat, cheese, wool, hides, and qumis, an alcoholic beverage made from horse's milk.

The nomads were not isolated. They depended on settled societies in complex ways. They learned from them and traded with them. They exchanged their horses for grain, textiles, and metals for tools and weapons. They often controlled the various Silk Road routes and took payment from caravans on them. More than goods came to the lands of the nomads along these overland routes. Conquerors and merchants alike also brought ideas,

skills, and various religious traditions. Oases and cities like Samarkand were central points from which influences radiated. Buddhism and Islam were perhaps the most important of the religious traditions brought to this region over the centuries. Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Nestorian Christianity, and Judaism were also carried along these overland routes—in many cases all the way to China.

5. Each group member should develop some supporting questions about the primary sources your group has been asked to discuss. Use the secondary source above to help you think about these questions. Develop supporting questions that will help answer your group's compelling question. As a group, choose one supporting question for each primary source and record those questions here.

Primary Source 1.2

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Primary Source 1.5

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Primary Source 1.10

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## **Day Two**

6. As a group, make a claim about your compelling question. The claim should be one you can back up with evidence from your assigned sources. This claim is your evidence-based answer to your group's own compelling question. Here is that question again:

“Nomadic societies often fought with settled societies. Yet the two kinds of societies often also benefited from one another economically.” Explain why you do or do not agree with this statement.

State your group's claim here:

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7. From the remaining seven primary sources for this lesson, choose one additional source that your group believes can help support or clarify its claim. The source may also be one that challenges this claim in a way that seems important. In the space below, list the source your group chose and briefly state why you chose it.

Source:

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Reason for choosing this source:

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8. Prepare a brief (five- to ten-minute) presentation. Summarize the sources you have used. Discuss the supporting questions you developed. Explain your answer to your group's discipline-based compelling question. Use the space below for notes or to create an outline of your group's presentation.



## Geography Group

GROUP MEMBERS:

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### *Nomads of the Steppes*

Your group's task is to explore geography issues related to the Eurasian nomads. A compelling question is provided. You will work from there to develop and answer supporting questions based on primary sources. Follow these steps to complete the task.

#### Day One

1. Review the concept of compelling and supporting questions with your instructor. Briefly, compelling questions focus on meaningful and enduring problems. They ask us to deal with major issues and important ideas. Supporting questions are those that help us to answer a compelling question.
2. As a group, briefly discuss the following compelling question:

How does geography help explain why nomadic empires of the Eurasian steppes could expand so rapidly and then shrink again just as rapidly?

3. Read and discuss Primary Sources 1.2, 1.3, and 1.6.
4. Read and discuss the following background information. Use the information to help complete the handout.

Those horse-riders of the Eurasian steppes were tough warriors. They had to be—they lived in one of the harshest environments on the planet. Where the region is not open grassland (good for grazing sheep, cattle, oxen, and horses), it is often desert (good for little at all). The Gobi Desert is harsh enough. The Taklimakan is a thousand miles of heat in summer and searing cold in winter, with winds and terrifying sandstorms. The open grasslands and deserts are divided up in many places by some of the highest mountains on earth. These also help to cut the region off from more settled societies

The nomads lived mainly on the open grasslands, which were good for herding animals but generally too dry and harsh for much farming. They lived in yurts made of felt produced from wool. In the bitter winters, the nomads moved to valleys or riverbeds less open to the winds. Over the course of a year, a tribe and its herds moved in a regular pattern perhaps a hundred miles or so from one pastureland to another. The nomads were

normally tribes made up of a few clans, or larger families. Chieftains would lead them in battle. Larger federations of tribes would arise at times. Their horse-riding warriors easily crossed the flat grasslands. Political unity never lasted long. The individual tribes and clans were small. They needed to maintain their own migration patterns, and normally held on fiercely to their independence.

5. Each group member should develop some supporting questions about the primary sources your group has been asked to discuss. Use the secondary source above to help you think about these questions. Develop supporting questions that will help answer your group's compelling question. As a group, choose one supporting question for each primary source and record those questions here.

Primary Source 1.2

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Primary Source 1.3

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Primary Source 1.6

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## **Day Two**

6. As a group, make a claim about your compelling question. The claim should be one you can back up with evidence from your assigned sources. This claim is your evidence-based answer to your group's own compelling question. Here is that question again:

How does geography help explain why nomadic empires of the Eurasian steppes could expand so rapidly and then shrink again just as rapidly?

State your group's claim here:

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7. From the remaining seven primary sources for this lesson, choose one additional source that your group believes can help support or clarify its claim. The source may also be one that challenges this claim in a way that seems important. In the space below, list the source your group chose and briefly state why you chose it.

Source:

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Reason for choosing this source:

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8. Prepare a brief (five- to ten-minute) presentation. Summarize the sources you have used. Discuss the supporting questions you developed. Explain your answer to your group's discipline-based compelling question. Use the space below for notes or to create an outline of your group's presentation.



## How to Analyze a Primary Source

For this lesson, you will be studying several primary source documents. This handout offers suggestions for how best to read and analyze historical primary sources. Studying such sources is challenging. They were created in a different time and place. Their language and use of certain key terms often differs from ours. They assume things we might not accept. They arise out of historical circumstances and settings that differ greatly from our own times. To use such sources as evidence, you need to apply some special historical-thinking skills and habits. Here are some guidelines to help you do this.

### ◆ *Question the source*

No primary source was written with you and your interests in mind, so you need to be clear about what you are looking for when you examine a source. You need to stay in charge of the investigation. Act like a detective and ask questions. Above all, keep your own most important compelling questions in mind as you read and think about a source.

### ◆ *Consider the source's origins*

This is often simply called “sourcing.” It means asking who created the source, when and where the source was created, and why. If you know the source’s purpose, you will be more likely to see how it is shaped by its creator’s point of view. Among other things, sourcing can also help you decide how reliable or typical a source might be.

### ◆ *Contextualize the source*

“Context” here means the broader historical setting for the source. Sources are always a part of a larger historical context. You need to consider how this context helps clarify the meaning of the source. You also need to decide which context is most important. Sources might be understood best in connection with a local context or a recent event. Alternatively, they might be understood better within a national or international context, or as part of a long-term trend in society at large. Your guiding questions should help you decide which context is most important.

### ◆ *Corroborate the source*

This means you must think about your source in relation to other sources. Does the source agree with or support those other sources, or does it seem to be at odds with the other sources? Might there be additional sources, which have not been provided to you, that could support or conflict with your source?

### ◆ *Above all, read the source carefully*

Look at language closely. Pay attention to images, emotional language, metaphors, and other literary devices. Think about what is implied, not merely what is stated or claimed in so many words. Think about what is left out as well as what is included. Make inferences based on your close reading. This will help you get more out of your source than even the source’s creator might have seen in it.

PRIMARY SOURCE ▶

I.I

## Nomads and Horses

The nomadic societies of the Eurasian steppe lands may have been less complex than settled societies. However, they were the first to fully master the horse as a weapon of war. Photo 1A is an Akhal-teke stallion. Such horses are famous for speed, stamina, and intelligence. They are well adapted to the Eurasian steppes and are one of the oldest horse breeds. They were known in ancient times as “Golden Horses” due to their shiny coats. Steppe nomads trained from an early age to ride and shoot arrows from swift moving horses. As Photo 1B shows, this is still the case in modern Mongolia. The photo shows a boy taking part in a horse race at Naadam in Mongolia.

### Original Documents



1A



1B

Original document sources: Akhal-teke stallion. © Artur Baboev / CC BY-SA 3.0  
Horse race at Naadam. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons.



PRIMARY SOURCE ▶

I.2

## The Nomadic Way of Life

The nomads lived mainly on open grasslands, which were good for herding animals but generally too dry and harsh for much farming. They lived in tents, known as “yurts.” This photo from the late 1800s shows a group still living in this manner. It shows a yurt and a group with a horse, sheep, and camel. In a treeless environment, yurts were made of felt produced from wool. Over the course of a year, a tribe and its herds usually moved in a regular pattern, perhaps a hundred miles or so from one pastureland to another. This photo was published between 1865 and 1872. It shows a dwelling in the Kyrgyz Republic, or Kyrgyzstan.

### Original Document



Original document source: Circa 1865, courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-12191.



PRIMARY SOURCE ►

I.3

## The Eurasian Steppe

The highlighted region on this map shows the approximate extent of the flat or rolling treeless grassland of the Eurasian steppe. This ecological region extends from Hungary in Eastern Europe westward through Russia and Ukraine north of the Black and Caspian Seas and into northern Eastern and Central Asia.

### Original Document



© Nystrom Education

## The Scythians – Early Nomads in the West

The Scythians were a group of Iranian nomadic people in the western and central Eurasian steppes. They were most powerful from about the seventh century to the third century BCE. As with many nomadic tribes on the steppes, their military skills were developed by regular raiding of other tribes. In time, nomadic federations organized huge military forces to mount large-scale conquests. However, young men were brought up from early childhood to master the arts of war in smaller raids, based on small groups of individual volunteers, single tribes or several tribes. In this passage, Lucian, a historian in ancient Rome, describes the way Scythians organized a tribal raid.

### Original Document

When a man has been injured by another, and desires vengeance, but feels that he is no match for his opponent, he sacrifices an ox, cuts up the flesh and cooks it, and spreads out the hide upon the ground. On this hide he takes his seat, holding his hands behind him, so as to suggest that his arms are tied in that position, this being the natural attitude of a suppliant among us. Meanwhile, the flesh of the ox has been laid out; and the man's relations and any others who feel so disposed come up and take a portion thereof, and, setting their right foot on the hide, promise whatever assistance is in their power: one will engage to furnish and maintain five horsemen, another ten, a third some larger number; while others, according to their ability, promise heavy or light-armed infantry, and the poorest, who have nothing else to give, offer their own personal services. The number of persons assembled on the hide is sometimes very considerable; nor could any troops be more reliable or more invincible than those which are collected in this manner, being as they are under a vow; for the act of stepping on to the hide constitutes an oath.

CONTINUED



### Adapted Version

When a man has been injured, he may want revenge against the man who injured him. He may feel he is no match for his opponent. In that case, he sacrifices an ox, cuts up the flesh and cooks it, and spreads the hide out on the ground. He sits on the hide, holding his hands behind him, suggesting that his arms are tied in that position. This is the typical posture of someone making a humble plea for help. Meanwhile, the flesh of the ox has been laid out. The man's family and any others who are willing to join with him come up and take a portion of this flesh. Then, setting their right foot on the hide, they promise to do whatever they can to help. One may promise to furnish and maintain five horsemen. Another promises ten. A third some larger number. Others, according to their ability, may promise heavy or light-armed infantry. The poorest, who have nothing else to give, offer their own personal services. Sometimes a very large number assemble on the hide. Nor could any troops be more reliable or more invincible than those who join in this way. That is because they have taken an oath by stepping on to the hide.

*Original document source: Lucian of Samosata, Complete Works of Lucian (Hastings, UK: Delphi, 2016).*

Sima Qian (145–90 BCE) was a court historian during the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). His *Records of the Grand Historian* was the official history of China up through his own lifetime. Among other things, he described various groups of people who lived outside China. As the Han emperors expanded China's territory, they came into conflict with the nomadic tribes along their borders. Many of those tribes formed the powerful Xiongnu nomadic empire that challenged Chinese expansion. In this passage, Sima Qian describes the Xiongnu.

### Original Document

The Xiongnu . . . live among the northern barbarians, moving to follow their flocks. They primarily raise horses, oxen, and sheep, but also keep unusual animals like camels, asses, mules, and wild horses. They move about in search of water and grass, having no cities, permanent dwellings, or agriculture. Still, they divide their territory into regions. They have no written language, so make oral agreements. Little boys are able to ride sheep and shoot birds and mice with bows and arrows. When they are somewhat older they shoot foxes and rabbits for food. Thus all the men can shoot and serve as cavalry.

It is the custom of the Xiongnu to support themselves in ordinary times by following their flocks and hunting, but in times of hardship they take up arms to raid. This would appear to be their nature. Bows and arrows are the weapons they use for distant targets; swords and spears the ones they use at close range. When it is to their advantage, they advance; when not they retreat, as they see no shame in retreat. Concern for propriety or duty does not inhibit their pursuit of advantage.

*Original document source:* Sima Quian as quoted in Patricia Buckley Ebrey, ed., *Chinese Civilization: A Sourcebook* (New York: Free Press, 1993).



PRIMARY SOURCE ►

I.6

## The Xiongnu Empire

This map shows the extent of the large Xiongnu Empire that arose as the Han Dynasty in China tried to expand into territories to its north and west. It also shows the variety of nomadic societies and tribes in the region. In some cases, these tribes joined with the Xiongnu and in other cases they remained independent or hostile to them.

## Original Document



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Eurasian nomads often went to war with two or more horses per warrior. This gave them extra staying power in their battles. In the fourth century CE, Roman soldier and historian Ammianus Marcellinus wrote about this practice among the Sarmatians.

### Original Document

[F]requent serious reports showed that the Sarmatians and the Quadi, who were in agreement because they were neighbors and had like customs and armor, had united and were raiding the Pannonias and Second Moesia in detached bands. These people, better fitted for brigandage than for open warfare, have very long spears and cuirasses made from smooth and polished pieces of horn, fastened like scales to linen shirts; most of their horses are made serviceable by gelding, in order that they may not at sight of mares become excited and run away, or when in ambush become unruly and betray their riders by loud neighing. And they run over very great distances . . . being mounted on swift and obedient horses and leading one, or sometimes even two, to the end that an exchange may keep up the strength of their mounts and that their freshness may be renewed by alternate periods of rest.

### Adapted Version

The Sarmatians and the Quadi were in agreement. Serious reports say this is because they were neighbors and they had similar customs and armor. They united and were raiding the Pannonias and Second Moesia in detached bands. These people are better fitted for robbery and plunder than for open warfare. They have very long spears and armor made from smooth and polished pieces of horn, fastened like scales to linen shirts. Most of their horses are castrated. As a result, they do not become excited at the sight of mares and run away, or become unruly in ambush and betray their riders by loud neighing. They run over very great distances. The riders are mounted on swift and obedient horses. They lead one, or sometimes even two, extra horses with them. This enables them to change horses and keep up the strength of their mounts by giving them alternate periods of rest.

Original document source: Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, XVII, 12.3, in *Ammianus Marcellinus*, translated by John C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935).

The greatest nomadic empire of all was the one established by the Mongols in the thirteenth century. Genghis (or Chinggis) Khan united the Mongol tribes starting in 1206. He launched a century of conquest. By the late 1200s, the Mongols had gained control of China, much of what is now Russia, parts of Eastern Europe and India, and much of Central Asia and the Middle East. His grandsons split the vast Mongol Empire into the four “khanates,” shown on this map. The map depicts the extent of these territories during the last half of the thirteenth century.

### Original Document

#### **The Mongol Empire at Its Height**

- A.** Golden Horde
- B.** Chagatai Khanate
- C.** Yuan Dynasty
- D.** Ilkhanate

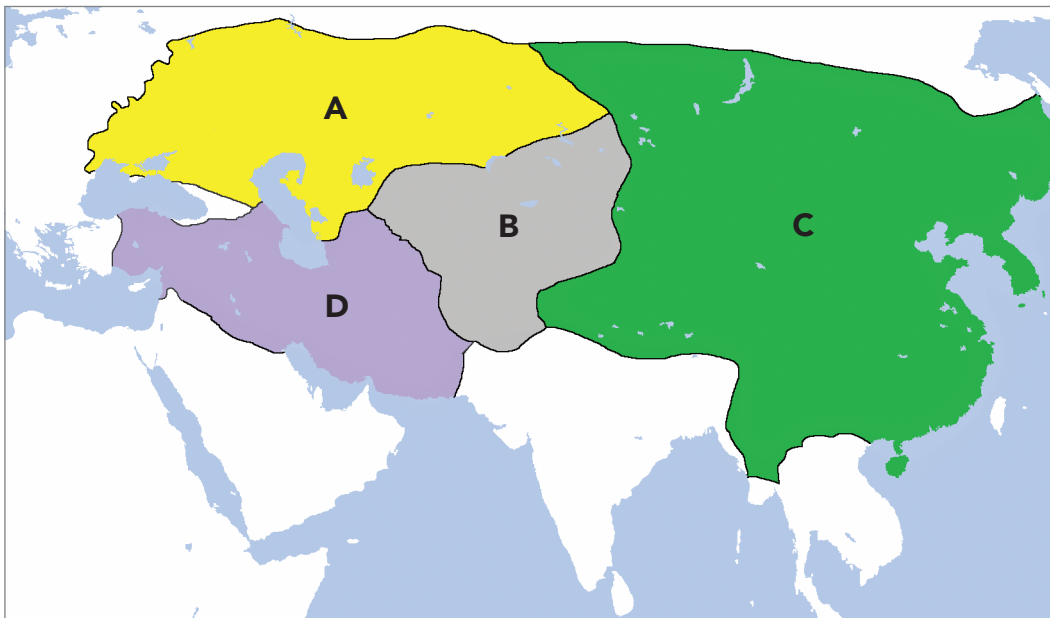


Image source: © Gabagool / CC BY 3.0



In 1245 CE, Pope Innocent IV sent two Franciscan monks to the Mongol kingdom. He was fearful about recent Mongol conquests in Russia and Eastern Europe. One of the monks the pope sent was John of Plano Carpini. John described his travels in his *History of the Mongols*. In this passage from that work, he describes the Mongol way of conducting their wars.

### Original Document

[Genghis] Khan divided his Tartars by captains of ten, captains of a hundred, and captains of a thousand, and over ten millenaries, or captains of a thousand, he placed one colonel, and over one whole army he authorized two or three chiefs, but so that all should be under one of the said chiefs. When they join battle against any other nation, unless they do all consent to retreat, every man who deserts is put to death. And if one or two, or more, of ten proceed manfully to the battle, but the residue of those ten draw back and follow not the company, they are in like manner slain. Also, if one among ten or more be taken, their fellows, if they fail to rescue them, are punished with death.

Moreover they are required to have these weapons: two long bows or one good one at least, three quivers full of arrows, and one axe, and ropes to draw engines of war. But the richer have single-edged swords, with sharp points, and somewhat crooked. They have also armed horses, with their shoulders and breasts protected; they have helmets and coats of mail. Some of them have jackets for their horses, made of leather artificially doubled or trebled, shaped upon their bodies. The upper part of their helmet is of iron or steel, but that part which circles about the neck and the throat is of leather.

### Adapted Version

Genghis Khan divided his Tartars by captains of ten, captains of a hundred, and captains of a thousand. He placed one colonel over ten “millenaries,” or captains of a thousand. Over one whole army he authorized two or three chiefs, with all of them under one of those chiefs. Once a battle is under way, any man who deserts is put to death, unless they all have agreed to retreat. If one or two or more out of ten go manfully into battle, but the rest hold back, they are slain. Also, if one among ten or more is captured, their fellows must rescue them. If they fail, they too are punished with death.

CONTINUED

PRIMARY SOURCE ►

I.9

THE MONGOL WAYS OF WAR CONTINUED

Moreover, they are required to have these weapons: two long bows or one good one at least, three quivers full of arrows, and one axe, and ropes to draw engines of war. The richer men have single-edged swords with sharp points, somewhat crooked. They also have armed horses, with their shoulders and breasts protected. They have helmets and coats of mail. Some of them have jackets for their horses, made of leather artificially doubled or tripled and shaped upon their bodies. The upper part of their helmet is made of iron or steel, but the part around the neck and the throat is made of leather.

*Original document source: John of Pian de Carpini, History of the Mongols as included in Contemporaries of Marco Polo, edited by Manuel Komroff (New York: Liveright, 1928).*



The Mongols were terrifying, ruthless warriors. However, once in control of much of Eurasia, they imposed a peace that benefited many other societies. In particular, they helped open, wider than ever, the series of land routes known as the Silk Road. These routes connected China across Central Asia to the Mediterranean Sea. Pegolotti's *Merchant Handbook* offers insight into the trading along these routes in the fourteenth century. Francesco Balducci Pegolotti worked for a merchant firm in the Italian city-state of Florence.

### Original Document

You may calculate that a merchant with a dragoman, and with two men servants, and with goods to the value of twenty-five thousand golden florins, should spend on his way to Cathay from sixty to eighty sommi of silver, and not more if he manage well; and for all the road back again from Cathay to Tana, including the expenses of living and the pay of servants, and all other charges, the cost will be about five sommi per head of pack animals, or something less. And you may reckon the sommo to be worth five golden florins.

You may reckon also that from Tana to Sara [in what is now southern Russia] the road is less safe than on any other part of the journey; and yet even when this part of the road is at its worst, if you are some sixty men in the company you will go as safely as if you were in your own house.

Anyone from Genoa or from Venice, wishing to go to the places above-named, and to make the journey to Cathay, should carry linens with him, and if he visit Organci [in what is now Uzbekistan east of the Caspian Sea] he will dispose of these well. In Organci he should purchase sommi of silver, and with these he should proceed without making any further investment, unless it be some bales of the very finest stuffs which go in small bulk, and cost no more for carriage than coarser stuffs would do.

Merchants who travel this road can ride on horseback or on asses, or mounted in any way that they list to be mounted.

Whatever silver the merchants may carry with them as far as Cathay the lord of Cathay will take from them and put into his treasury. And to merchants who thus bring silver they give that paper money of theirs in exchange. This is of yellow paper, stamped with the seal of the lord aforesaid. And this money is called balishi; and with this money you can readily buy silk and all other merchandise that you have a desire to buy. And all the people of the country are bound to receive it. And yet you shall not pay a higher price for your goods because your money is of paper.

CONTINUED

### Adapted Version

You can assume that a merchant with a guide, two man-servants, and 25,000 golden florins worth of goods, should spend sixty to eighty sommi of silver on his way to Cathay (China). If he manages well, he will not spend more. On the road back from Cathay to Tana, the cost will be no more than five sommi per head of pack animals, including living expenses, servants' pay, and all other charges. You may assume that the sommi is worth five golden florins.

Expect also that from Tana to Sara [in what is now southern Russia] the road is less safe than on any other part of the journey. Yet even at its worst there, if you have around sixty men with you, you will be as safe as if you were in your own house.

Anyone from Genoa or Venice going to these places and all the way to Cathay should carry linens with him. If he visit Organci [in what is now Uzbekistan east of the Caspian Sea] he will dispose of these well. In Organci he should purchase sommi of silver. With these he should continue without purchasing anything else. That is, unless he buys some bales of the very finest stuffs which go in small bulk and cost no more to transport than coarser stuffs.

Merchants who travel this road can ride on horseback or on asses or mounted any way they wish.

Whatever silver a merchant takes to Cathay, the lord of Cathay will accept and put in his treasury. To merchants who bring silver, they give that paper money of theirs in exchange. It is yellow paper, stamped with the seal of the lord of Cathay. This money is called balishi. With it, you can readily buy silk and all other merchandise you may want. All the people of the country have to accept it as payment. Yet you shall not pay a higher price for your goods because your money is of paper.



## Communicating Results and Taking Action

### Communicating Results

- ◆ Reread Primary Sources 1.2, 1.4, 1.5., 1.7, and 1.9. These are all descriptions of nomads by writers from settled societies. List some questions you have about the likely accuracy of each of these accounts. Write a brief paper explaining what you think is most reliable in the accounts and what is least reliable. Be prepared to share your paper with the rest of the class in a discussion about the reliability of these sources.
- ◆ Pretend you are a merchant in the fourteenth century. Reread Primary Source 1.10, a passage from Pegolotti's *Merchant Handbook*. Using this and at least two other primary sources, write a journal with four entries. One should be about planning a trip from somewhere in present-day Iran or Turkey to China. Two entries should be about important stops along the way. The final entry should be about arriving in China. The entries should refer specifically to information in Pegolotti's handbook and two other primary sources from this lesson.
- ◆ Nomads were often vastly superior as warriors to the armies of more complex settled societies. Write a letter to the emperor of China explaining why these fighters were so fierce and effective. In explaining this to the emperor, you should refer to the details of at least three of the primary sources for this lesson. Also recommend things the emperor might do to better defend against nomadic armies.

### Taking Action

- ◆ According to one estimate, out of about seven billion people, only thirty million or so lead nomadic migratory lives—for example the Tuareg of northern Africa, the Evenks of north-eastern Russia, the Himba of Southwestern Africa, the Kuchi of Afghanistan, the Aborigines of Australia, and the Laplanders (a.k.a Sami) of Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Russia. In a small group, research one of these nomadic peoples or one other modern-day nomadic society of your choice. Your group should prepare a brief presentation on the environment, lifestyle, and challenges facing the nomadic society you chose. Present your findings to the class. Your teacher will film these presentations and the discussions about them.
- ◆ Your teacher will upload the video from the previous assignment. Use social media to link to and discuss the presentation. Ask those contacted in this way to comment and communicate with others about it. Invite suggestions as to how best to help nomadic people live near and adjust to the modern world around them.

## Nomads of the Steppes Rubric

Criteria	Unacceptable	Developing	Proficient	Excellent
<b>Focus</b>	Tries to respond to task instructions but lacks clear focus on a central idea or thesis	Addresses the task instructions adequately but focus on a central idea or thesis is uneven	Responds to the task instructions appropriately and convincingly; has a consistent focus on a central idea or thesis	Responds to all task instructions convincingly; has a clear and strong focus on a well-developed central idea or thesis
<b>Research</b>	Refers to some sources but fails to connect these in a way relevant to the task instructions	Refers to relevant sources well but does not always connect these clearly to the task instructions	Refers to relevant sources accurately and usually connects these to the task instructions and a central idea	Refers to relevant sources accurately and in great detail and connects these clearly to the task instructions and a central idea
<b>Development and Use of Evidence</b>	Uses some details and evidence from sources but does not make clear the relevance to the task purpose or instructions	Uses details and evidence from sources generally but not always in support of a clear focus relevant to the task purpose or instructions	Uses details and evidence from sources in a way that effectively supports a focus relevant to the task purpose or instructions	Uses details and evidence from sources along with clear explanations demonstrating deep understanding of the task purpose or instructions
<b>Content</b>	Refers to disciplinary content without clearly understanding it or while using it in an irrelevant or inaccurate manner	Refers to disciplinary content with some understanding but not always with a clear idea of its relation to the overall task	Accurately uses disciplinary content and demonstrates a clear idea of its relation to the overall task	Uses disciplinary content effectively and explains thoroughly and in-depth its relation to the overall task
<b>Conventions</b>	Demonstrates only limited control of standard English conventions, with many errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and other conventions	Demonstrates some command of standard English conventions with limited errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and other conventions	Demonstrates adequate command of standard English conventions with few errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and other conventions	Demonstrates a well-developed command of standard English conventions with few errors and a use of language appropriate to the audience and the purpose of the task



## Primary Source Bibliography

- 1.1: 1A. Akhal-teke stallion. © Artur Baboev / CC BY-SA 3.0.  
1B. Horse race at Naadam. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons.
- 1.2: Circa 1865, courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-12191.
- 1.3: © Nystrom Education
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