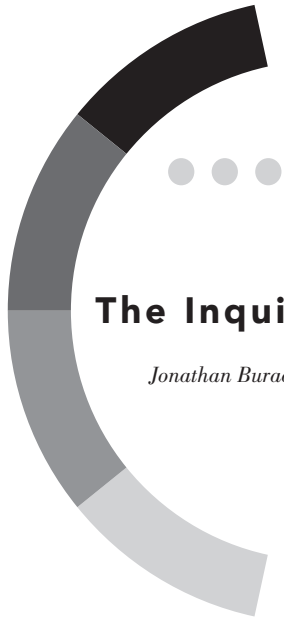


The Early Modern Age



The Inquiry Arc in U.S. History

Jonathan Burack

The Voyages of Zheng He

MindSparks®

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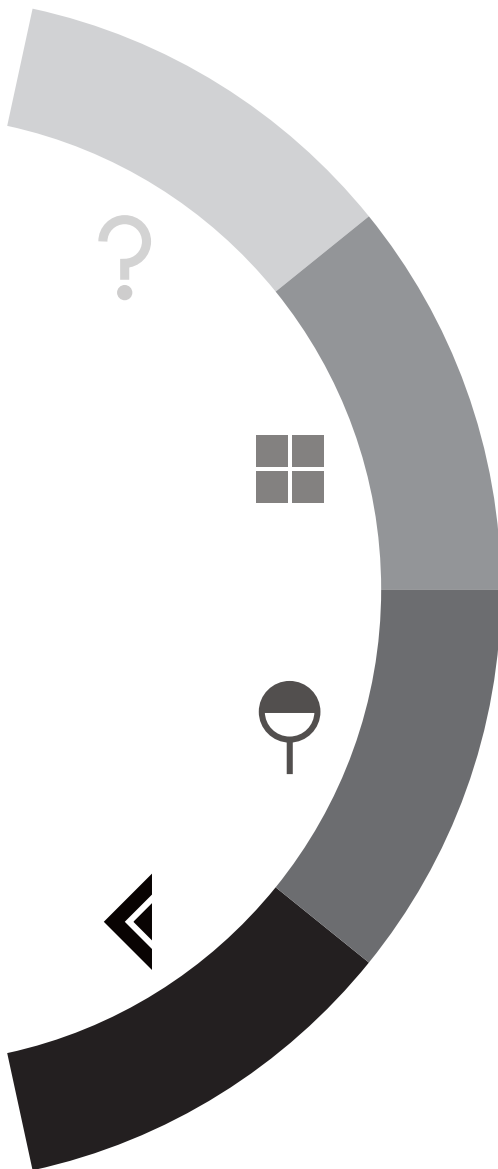
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C3 Framework

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.

3 Evaluating sources and using evidence

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 lesson.

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 packet of primary and secondary 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 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.



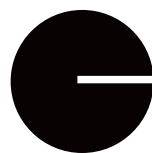
History



Civics



Economics



Geography



The Voyages of Zheng He

Why Were They Abandoned?

Overview

Introduction

From 1405 to 1433, China's eunuch admiral Zheng He commanded seven amazing voyages into the Indian Ocean trading network. What was astonishing about them was their sheer size. Each fleet was made up of hundreds of large ships. Among these, the largest ships were the enormous treasure ships. Evidence suggests they may have been as much as 400 feet long and 160 feet wide. Each of the voyages included about 40 to 60 of these huge treasure ships. In addition to the crews and other personnel, these fleets carried huge numbers of soldiers. The first voyage is reported to have had 27,000 soldiers on board. These fleets were mighty armadas indeed. However, there is much we do not know about them. Why were they sent from China to as far away as India, Arabia, and East Africa? And why were they suddenly abandoned after 1433? This last question is the compelling question this lesson will focus on. Students will work with seven primary sources and three secondary 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 voyages of Zheng He. They will apply discipline-specific background knowledge, use scaffolding, and engage in instructional activities to interpret primary and secondary 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 view 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.CIV.8.6-8.** Analyze ideas and principles contained in the founding documents of the United States, and explain how they influence the social and political system.
- ◆ **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

Why did the voyages of Zheng He come to an end?

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 Voyages of Zheng He.

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 back to the handout as they read the 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 lesson'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 sources for this lesson. Each group may share a primary and secondary 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 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 sources, they will select one that supports their claim.
7. Using the evidence gathered from the sources, each group will then prepare a brief five- to ten-minute presentation about the voyages of Zheng He 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 a related type of presentation. Allow time for students to prepare by discussing and debating topics among themselves.

Day Three

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 Voyages of Zheng He Rubric so they can understand how their performance will be evaluated. The projects are summarized below.

Communicating Results

- ◆ Ask students to reread Primary Source 4.9. This is the 1477 comment of the Confucian vice president of the Board of the War. Have students pretend to be advisers to the Chinese emperor in 1477. Ask them to each write a long letter to the emperor expressing their views about what the Board of War vice president has said about Zheng He and his voyages. In this letter, the student should refer in detail to three of the sources for this unit.
- ◆ Have students reread Primary Source 4.8. This is a passage from the *Tao Te Ching* (The Way and Its Power). It was a favorite of the first Ming emperor, the Hongwu emperor. It was this emperor's son, the Yongle emperor, who sent Zheng He on his voyages. Have each student write a brief essay explaining why the Yongle emperor was or was not still following the philosophy of life expressed in the passage and in his father's rule.


- ◆ Separate students into small groups. Have each group find online or in books five artists' drawings, diagrams, or photos of models of Zheng He's treasure ships. Each group should do some research online to see what is and is not known about the size, shape, and capabilities of the treasure ships. The groups then should create brief presentations of their findings under the heading "What Is and Is Not Known about Zheng He's Treasure Ships."

Taking Action

- ◆ In recent years, a huge controversy has unfolded regarding Gavin Menzies's bestselling *1421: The Year China Discovered America*. Separate students into small groups. Have each group do research online regarding this book and the controversy it has sparked. Based on what each group discovers, ask each group to compose a letter about the controversy to send to the AP College Board expressing the group's views on whether or not Menzies's theory about Zheng He deserves any treatment at all in the College Board's Advanced Placement history courses. Post these letters and have each group present its conclusions in an all-class discussion. Invite any other history classes in the school to attend this discussion.
- ◆ Based on the work in the previous assignment, each group should send its letter to those in charge of the College Board's Advanced Placement history courses. Have each group report back on any responses it gets and discuss these with the class.

Introductory Essay

The Voyages of Zheng He



In 1368, the Ming Dynasty came to power in China. It did so by driving out the Mongol invaders who had ruled China as the Yuan Dynasty for a century. The first Ming ruler was the Hongwu emperor. He hoped to reestablish an older, more traditional and more powerful China. The Hongwu emperor's son had big ideas about how to do this. He was the Yongle emperor, and he ruled from 1402–1424. He dealt with the remaining threats from the Mongols by fighting several brutal wars with them. He also tried to expand south, fighting a long, losing war with Annam (today's Vietnam). He moved China's capital city from Nanjing to what is today Beijing in the north. In doing so, he mobilized hundreds of thousands of laborers to build the Forbidden City in Beijing.

In another huge project, he also put one of his eunuch advisers, Zheng He, in charge of one of the world's most astonishing series of ocean voyages.

From 1405 to 1433, Zheng He commanded seven voyages. One astonishing thing about them was their sheer size. Each fleet was made up of hundreds of large ships. Among these, the largest ships were the enormous treasure ships. Historians cannot be sure, but evidence suggests they may have been as much as 400 feet long and 160 feet wide. Each of the voyages included about 40 to 60 of these huge treasure ships. In addition to the crews and other personnel, these fleets carried huge numbers of soldiers. The first voyage is reported to have had 27,000 soldiers on board. These fleets were mighty armadas indeed. However, there is much we do not know about them. Why? Because after the last of the voyages, in 1433, the fleets were retired. China turned away from sea travel. Over the years the treasure ships rotted away. Almost no physical trace of them remains—except possibly one large rudder.

A statue of Zheng He in Malaysia

What was the purpose of Zheng He's voyages? This is not an easy question to answer. For example, many have viewed these voyages as great feats of ocean exploration. However, all of Zheng He's voyages followed an Indian Ocean trading network that Chinese merchants had known about for centuries. The huge flat-bottomed treasure ships were amazing. However, they may not have been of the best design for long-term exploration such as crossing the Pacific Ocean. These ships moved at a very slow pace. They visited lands already known to the Chinese. They inspired awe. But it is not clear they would have been useful for ocean exploration.

Was the purpose of Zheng He's voyages to promote trade? The ships did carry large amounts of Chinese goods—silks, porcelains, lacquerware, tea, and ironworks. These were exchanged for other luxury items or exotic gifts to be sent back to China's emperor. However, these exchanges were between governments. They did little to expand already existing merchant trading patterns. Even during the time of these voyages, Ming rulers acted to keep private merchants from trading overseas. Zheng He's enormous fleets carried large numbers of soldiers. They did fight certain battles at times on land. However, the fleets themselves were not used to protect overseas commerce.

Many historians now see the Zheng He voyages as an effort to extend China's tributary system to the Indian Ocean societies. This tributary system involved exchanges of material gifts. However, the purpose had little to do with trade—though it might have led to more trade as well. Zheng He's gigantic fleets did carry exotic gifts back to China's emperor. They also carried diplomats from the countries visited. The diplomats went to China to receive its approval of their governments. In return, they had to acknowledge China's superior authority throughout the entire region. The huge size of the fleets helped to instill awe—and perhaps even fear. The purpose was to enhance China's authority without engaging in actual conquest and colonization.

Whatever their purpose, the voyages of Zheng He did not lead to a long-term effort to develop sea power. Instead, many of China's Confucian scholar-officials turned against the huge costs of the voyages. They also turned against the Yongle emperor's wars and other expensive projects. In time, the treasure ships rotted away. For centuries, the Chinese forgot about Zheng He and his astounding ventures on the open seas. Much about his great voyages remains hard to understand. Why were these enormous fleets built and used? And why were they abandoned so completely? The sources for this lesson will help you answer these compelling questions.

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History Group

GROUP MEMBERS:

The Voyages of Zheng He

Your group's task is to explore history issues related to the voyages of Zheng He. A disciplinary compelling question is provided, and you will work from there to develop and answer supporting questions based on the 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 to answer a compelling question.
2. As a group, briefly discuss the following compelling question:

“Zheng He’s fleet of treasure ships was unusual. But it was not that new of a seafaring venture for the Chinese.” Explain why you do or do not agree with this statement.
3. Read and discuss Primary Sources 4.3 and 4.5 and Secondary Source 4.2.
4. Read and discuss the following background information. Use the information to help complete the handout.

Long before Zheng He, foreign merchants were traveling the Indian Ocean sea routes. These sea lanes linked Arabia and East Africa to India and Southeast Asia. Starting in the 8th century CE, Muslims and other merchants traded spices, slaves, incense, ivory, and Chinese silk and porcelain. The powerful Arab empires of the Middle East stressed long-distance trade. Their demand for luxury goods was huge.

At first, China expected these other merchants to come to it. After all, its fine silk, tea, and porcelain were in high demand everywhere. In return, China purchased pepper, other spices, cotton, and many other luxury goods. However, by the 10th century, Chinese merchants were themselves taking the to sea in growing numbers. They sailed down the coast of China, past what is now Vietnam and Cambodia. Most stopped at ports on the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra. There they traded their goods to other merchants who carried them across the Indian Ocean. By the time

of the Song Dynasty (960–1279), the Chinese were already building large ocean-going ships. These benefited from innovations such as the compass, deep keels, and double-thickness hulls. Long before Zheng He’s time, China was able to sail the open seas along its coast and into the Indian Ocean.

5. Each group member should develop some supporting questions about the sources your group has been asked to discuss. Use the background information 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 source and record those questions here.

Secondary Source 4.2

Primary Source 4.3

Primary Source 4.5

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:

“Zheng He’s fleet of treasure ships was unusual. But it was not that new of a seafaring venture for the Chinese.” Explain why you do or do not agree with this statement.

State your group's claim here:

7. From the remaining seven 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:

Reason for choosing this source:

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.



GROUP MEMBERS:

The Voyages of Zheng He

Your group's task is to explore the civics issues related to the voyages of Zheng He. A compelling question is provided, and 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:

Were Zheng He's voyages efforts to promote peaceful trade? Or were they a way for China to control the Indian Ocean region politically? Explain your answer.

3. Read and discuss Primary Sources 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6.
4. Read and discuss the following background information. Use the information to help complete the handout.

Many writers describe Zheng He's voyages as purely peaceful ventures. They say China did not have conquest in mind. In that way, China differed from Spain, Portugal, Great Britain, and other Western European nations. According to writer Tan Ta Sen, these European nations "had all become colonists through acts of invasion using military force. . . . However, China's traditional Confucian culture is the opposite. It advocates a benevolent government, that is, to enforce justice on behalf of Heaven." Tan adds that the Ming emperors "ordered that . . . the Ming fleet should not bully the weak and mount wars for the sake of battle glory."

Not everyone agrees with this view. Historian Edward Dreyer says, "Zheng He's fleet was actually an armada" carrying a powerful army. In his view, "its purpose was to awe the rulers of Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean into sending tribute to China." Dreyer also says "most of the states visited by Zheng He's fleet sent tribute only under compulsion." After the voyages ended, these nations stopped sending tribute.

The Chinese did not establish colonies in the lands Zheng He visited. Was this because the voyages were truly peaceful? Or did their great power allow the Chinese to control the region without creating colonies?

5. Each group member should develop some supporting questions about the primary sources your group has been asked to discuss. Use the background information 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 4.4

Primary Source 4.5

Primary Source 4.6

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:

Were Zheng He's voyages efforts to promote peaceful trade? Or were they a way for China to control the Indian Ocean region politically? Explain your answer.

State your group's claim here:

7. From the remaining seven 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:

Reason for choosing this source:

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.



GROUP MEMBERS:

The Voyages of Zheng He

Your group's task is to explore the economics issues related to the voyages of Zheng He. A compelling question is provided, and you will work from there to develop and answer supporting questions based on the 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:

“The voyages of Zheng He were meant mainly to foster the traditional tribute system, not create a new international trading system.” Explain why you do or do not agree with this statement.
3. Read and discuss Primary Sources 4.4 and 4.7 and Secondary Source 4.2.
4. Read and discuss the following background information. Use the information to help complete the handout.

The term *tributary system* has been used for China's unusual ways of dealing with non-Chinese societies. It refers to practices having to do with trade and diplomacy. Its central feature was the exchange of gifts between rulers. In these exchanges, foreign rulers would supply tribute goods to the Chinese emperor. The emperor would respond in turn with very generous, high-value goods. The foreign rulers benefited from these goods. They also benefited from China's recognition of them as the legitimate rulers of their lands. In turn, the foreign leaders had to acknowledge China's superior authority. During the voyages of Zheng He, China was involved in several large-scale wars with Mongols to its north. It needed all the allies it could find.

Often these tributary gestures led to normal trading on a larger scale. That may be what foreigners most wanted. Few of these tributary states gave up any real independence. At least they did not do so for long. This was

certainly true of the states visited by Zheng He. All of them were far from China. How much importance as allies could they have? The treasure ships carried many goods. For the states visited, trade may have been their main concern. The question is how did these expensive voyages add to an Indian Ocean system of trade already established? That is not an easy question to answer.

5. Each group member should develop some supporting questions about the sources your group has been asked to discuss. Use the background information 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 source and record those questions here.

Secondary Source 4.2

Primary Source 4.4

Primary Source 4.7

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:

“The voyages of Zheng He were meant mainly to foster the traditional tribute system, not create a new international trading system.” Explain why you do or do not agree with this statement.

State your group’s claim here:

7. From the remaining seven 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:

Reason for choosing this source:

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:

The Voyages of Zheng He

Your group's task is to explore geography issues related to the voyages of Zheng He. A compelling question is provided, and you will work from there to develop and answer supporting questions based on the 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:

After 1433, China abandoned any effort to engage in transoceanic exploration. What geographical factors may have led it to make this decision?

3. Read and discuss Primary Sources 4.8 and 4.9 and Secondary Source 4.10.
4. Read and discuss the following background information. Use the information to help complete the handout.

Some have wondered why China never tried to cross the Pacific to the Americas. After all, Zheng He's treasure ships were huge. They were much larger than the ships Columbus used to sail from Spain to the islands of the Caribbean. However, the distance across the Pacific is much greater than the distances across the Atlantic from Europe to the Americas. Moreover, China had less reason to look east than European explorers did to sail west. The European explorers hoped to find a better route to the riches of East Asia. China had no such idea about lands that might lie across the Pacific.

Moreover, China's main interests had to do with regions to its south, north, and west. During the years when Zheng He was sailing the Indian Ocean, China fought five major wars with the Mongols to its north. It also fought a war with Annam (today's Vietnam) to the south. It was deeply concerned about security along the Silk Roads to the west. This set of land routes crossed Central Asia north of the Himalayas and other nearby mountains.

China had long looked for chances to expand westward. The voyages of Zheng He may have been related to that goal. That is, their purpose may have been to secure the friendship of lands to the south while China dealt with rivals farther north.

5. Each group member should develop some supporting questions about the sources your group has been asked to discuss. Use the background information 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 source and record those questions here.

Primary Source 4.8

Primary Source 4.9

Secondary Source 4.10

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:

After 1433, China abandoned any effort to engage in transoceanic exploration. What geographical factors may have led it to make this decision?

State your group's claim here:

7. From the remaining seven 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:

Reason for choosing this source:

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 differ 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.

SECONDARY SOURCE ▶

4.I

The Treasure Ships of Zheng He's Fleet

This photo is of a full-size model of a middle-sized treasure boat of the Zheng He fleet. It is on display at the Treasure Boat Shipyard site in Nanjing. It was built in 2005. The model is 207 feet long. Some historians estimate that the largest treasure ships were more than 400 feet long. Historians are not sure, because none of the ships survived.



A replica of a treasure ship

Image Source: © Vmenkov / CC BY-SA 3.0

SECONDARY SOURCE ▶

4.2

Zheng He's Routes

This map shows the main routes followed by Zheng He's expeditions. The fleets sailed down the eastern coast of China and Southeast Asia to Surabaya or other ports in Java, then up through the Straits of Malacca and across the Indian Ocean to what is today the island of Sri Lanka and to the western coast of the Indian subcontinent. Some of Zheng He's later expeditions also crossed the Arabian sea and stopped at Hormuz, at ports on the coast of Arabia, and down along the coast of East Africa. These routes were all part of a vast Indian Ocean trading system that Muslim, Chinese, and other merchants had been using for centuries by the time of Zheng He's voyages.



Image Source: © Vmenkov / CC BY 1.0

The Italian merchant and explorer Marco Polo (1254–1325) spent many years in China in the late 1200s. He later wrote an account of his many years in China in a book known as *The Travels of Marco Polo*. More than a century before Zheng He's fleet was built, Marco Polo commented on the very large ships China was already building.

Original Document

Some ships, namely those which are larger, have besides quite 13 holds, that is, divisions, on the inside, made with strong planks fitted together, so that if by accident that the ship is staved in any place, namely that either it strikes on a rock, or a whale-fish striking against it in search of food staves it in. . . . And then the water entering through the hole runs to the bilge, which never remains occupied with any things. And then the sailors find out where the ship is staved, and then the hold which answers to the break is emptied into others, for the water cannot pass from one hold to another, so strongly are they shut in; and then they repair the ship there, and put back there the goods which had been taken out. . . .

Moreover I tell you that these ships want some 300 sailors, some 200, some 150, some more, some fewer, according as the ships are larger and smaller.

They also carry a much greater burden than ours.

Adapted Version

Some of their larger ships have 13 holds, or divisions, on the inside. They are made with strong planks fitted together. As a result, if the ship is accidentally caved in somewhere, by hitting a rock, or from a whale striking it in search of food, then the water entering through the hole runs to the lowest part of the hull. This area, the bilge, never remains occupied with anything. Then the sailors find out where the ship is caved in. Whatever is in the hold that has suffered the break is emptied into other holds, because the water cannot pass from one hold to another, so strongly are they shut in. Then the sailors repair the damaged ship hold and put back the goods that had been taken out.

Moreover, I tell you that some of these ships need to be manned by 300 sailors, some 200, some 150, some more, some fewer, according to the size of the ship.

They also carry a much greater burden than ours.

PRIMARY SOURCE ▶

4.4

The Emperor Sends His Treasure Ships into the "Western Ocean"

This is a passage from the biography of Zheng He in the *Ming Shi* (History of Ming), an official Chinese history of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) as recorded during the next dynasty (the Qing Dynasty). The history was not completed until 1739. The measurement of 44 *zhang* is equal to more than 400 feet. We cannot be absolutely sure the ships were this long, seeing as no remains of any of them have survived.

Original Document

[The Emperor Yongle] wanted to display his soldiers in strange lands in order to make manifest the wealth and power of the Middle Kingdom. In the sixth month of the third year of Yongle, he ordered Zheng He, along with his associates Wang Jinghong and others, to go as envoys throughout the Western Oceans. They led over 27,800 officers and men and were well supplied with gold and silk for gifts. Sixty-two great ships had been built, 44 *zhang* long and 18 *zhang* wide. [The fleet] went in succession to the various foreign countries, proclaiming the edicts of the Son of Heaven and giving gifts to their rulers and chieftains. Those who did not submit were pacified by force.

Original Document Source: Passage from *Ming Shi* (History of Ming), ed. and trans. Edward L. Dreyer, in *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405-1433* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007).

PRIMARY SOURCE ▶

4.5

Zheng He's *Liujiagang* Inscription

At the start of his last voyage, Zheng He stopped first at two places in China—Liujiagang on the Yangtze River and Changle farther south in China. He had inscriptions carved into stone tablets at both places. These summarized and explained his voyages. This brief passage is from the inscription carved at Liujiagang. It suggests something of his attitude toward the lands he was visiting and his purposes in visiting them.

Original Document

When we arrived at the foreign countries, barbarian kings who resisted transformation [by Chinese civilization] and were not respectful we captured alive, and bandit soldiers who looted and plundered recklessly we exterminated. Because of this, the sea routes became pure and peaceful and the foreign peoples could rely upon them and pursue their occupations in safety.

Adapted Version

When we arrived in the foreign countries, a few barbarian kings resisted China's efforts to bring change to them. We captured alive those who were not respectful. We exterminated bandit soldiers who looted and plundered recklessly. Because of this, the sea routes became pure and peaceful. Foreign peoples could rely upon them and pursue their occupations in safety.

Original Document Source: Zheng He, inscription at Liujiagang, ed. and trans. Edward L. Dreyer, in *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007).

PRIMARY SOURCE ▶

4.6

The Fight with the King of Ceylon

On his first voyage, Zheng He thought the king of Ceylon, Alagakkonora, was insulting and threatening. (Ceylon is current-day Sri Lanka, a large island south of India.) On his third voyage, Zheng He again stopped in Ceylon to engage in a show of force. Ceylon's forces apparently attacked them. This account of what followed is from an official record of the Yongle emperor's reign called the *Taizong Shilu*.

Original Document

Palace official Zheng He and the others, who had gone as envoys to the barbarian countries of the Western Ocean, returned and presented as captives the King of Ceylon, Alagakkonora, together with his family and dependents.

Zheng He and the others, in the course of their first embassy to the barbarians had arrived at Ceylon, and Alagakkonora had been rude and disrespectful and intended to kill Zheng He. Zheng He realized this and left. Moreover, Alagakkonora was not on friendly terms with the neighboring countries, and he had often intercepted and plundered their embassies en route to and from China. Since the other barbarians all had suffered from this, when Zheng He returned they once more treated Ceylon with contempt. Because of this provocation, Alagakkonora lured Zheng He into the interior of the country and sent his son Nayanar to demand gold, silver, and other precious goods. If these goods were not turned over, then 50,000 barbarian troops were to rise from concealment and plunder Zheng He's ships. Moreover, trees had been felled to block the narrow passages and cut off Zheng He's path of retreat, so that the separate Chinese contingents could not reinforce one another.

When Zheng He and the others realized they were in danger of becoming separated from the fleet, they pressed their troops to return to the ships quickly. When they reached the roadblocks, Zheng He said to his subordinates, "The main body of the bandits has already come out, so the interior of the country must be empty. Moreover, they are saying we are only an invading army that is isolated and afraid and incapable of doing anything. But if we go forth and attack them, then contrary to their expectations we may gain their objective." Then he secretly ordered messengers to go by other unblocked roads back to the Chinese ships, to order their petty officers and soldiers to hold out to the death with all their strength. Meanwhile he personally led over two thousand troops under his immediate command by indirect routes. They assaulted the earthen walls of the capital by surprise and broke through, capturing Alagakkonora and his family, dependents and principal chieftains. The barbarian army then returned and surrounded the city. Zheng He engaged them in battle several times and heavily defeated them.

CONTINUED

Afterward, when Zheng He returned, the assembled Ming ministers requested that Alagakkonora and other captives be executed. But the emperor pitied them as ignorant people who were without knowledge of the Mandate of Heaven; he treated them leniently and released them, giving them food and clothing, and ordering the Ministry of Rites to advise on selecting a worthy one from Alagakkonora's family to be set up as king.

Adapted Version

Palace official Zheng He and the others had gone as envoys to the barbarian countries of the Western Ocean. They returned and presented as captives the King of Ceylon, Alagakkonora, together with his family and dependents.

Alagakkonora of Ceylon had been rude and disrespectful when Zheng He and the others first visited the barbarians. He had intended to kill Zheng He. Zheng He realized this and left. Alagakkonora was also not on friendly terms with the neighboring countries. He had often intercepted and plundered their voyages to and from China. Since the other barbarians all had suffered from this, when Zheng He returned, they once more treated Ceylon with contempt. Because of this, Alagakkonora lured Zheng He into the interior of the country and sent his son Nayanar to demand gold, silver, and other precious goods. If these goods were not turned over, then 50,000 hidden barbarian troops were to rise and plunder Zheng He's ships. Moreover, trees had been felled to block Zheng He's path of retreat. This would keep the separated Chinese forces from helping one another.

When Zheng He and the others realized they could be cut off from the fleet, they rushed back to the ships. When they reached the roadblocks, Zheng He said, "The main body of the bandits has already come out, so the interior of the country must be empty. Moreover, they are saying we are only an invading army that is isolated and afraid and incapable of doing anything. But if we go forth and attack them, then contrary to their expectations we may gain their objective." Then he secretly ordered messengers to go by other unblocked roads back to the Chinese ships. They then ordered forces there to hold out to the death. Meanwhile he personally led over two thousand troops to the capital by indirect routes. They assaulted the earthen walls and broke through. They captured Alagakkonora, his family, his dependents, and his principal chieftains. The barbarian army then returned and surrounded the city. Zheng He engaged them in battle several times and heavily defeated them.

CONTINUED

PRIMARY SOURCE ▶

4.6

THE FIGHT WITH THE KING OF CEYLON CONTINUED

When Zheng He returned to China, the Ming ministers asked that Alagakkonora and other captives be executed. But the emperor pitied them. He saw them as ignorant people who knew nothing of the Mandate of Heaven. He treated them leniently and released them. He gave them food and clothing, and he ordered the Ministry of Rites to advise them on selecting a worthy member of Alagakkonara's family to be made king.

Original Document Source: Passage from *Taizong Shilu*, trans. Geoff Wade, quoted in Edward L. Dreyer, ed., *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007).

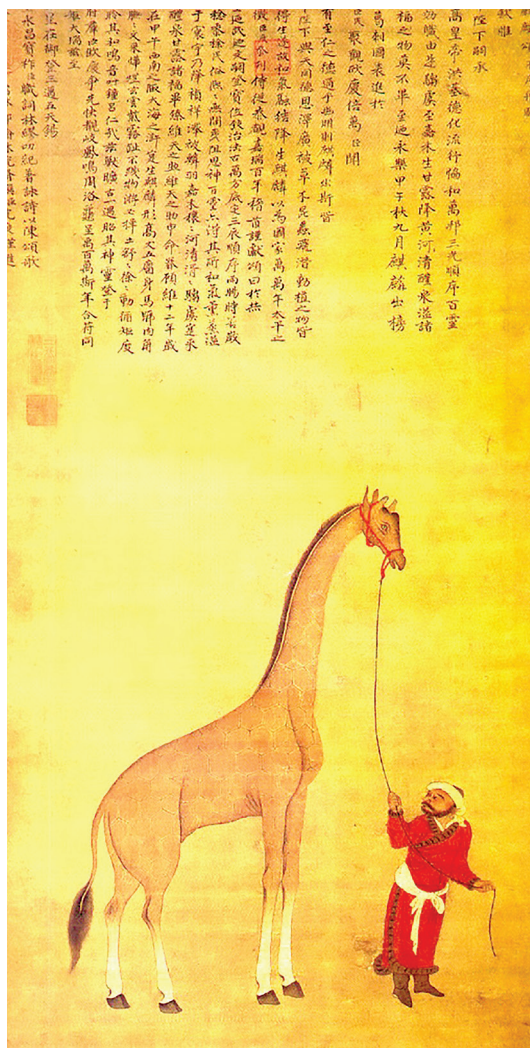
PRIMARY SOURCE ▶

4.7

A Giraffe Given in Tribute

Zheng He brought gifts from the Ming emperor and granted titles to local rulers. The aim was to establish a large number of tributary states. In October 1415, Zheng He reached the eastern coast of Africa. He returned with the first of two giraffes offered as gifts to the Chinese Yongle emperor. The Chinese identified the giraffe with a mythical animal called a *Qilin*. The emperor saw the capture of these giraffes as a sign of the greatness of his power.

Original Document



A sixteenth-century illustration of a giraffe

Image Source: Copy of Shen Du's *Tribute Giraffe with Attendant*, by an unknown painter. Public domain.

PRIMARY SOURCE ▶

4.8

The Ming Founder Looks to the Past

This passage is from the *Tao Te Ching* (The Way and Its Power), an ancient Chinese text. The passage was a favorite of the peasant rebel leader Zhu Yuanzhang, who founded the Ming dynasty and reigned as the Hongwu emperor (1368–1398). He longed for a simple peasant society in which trade was kept to a minimum and people lived in their small, rural villages. His son was the Yongle emperor (1402–1424) that sent Zheng He on his first six voyages. Despite these voyages, the Yongle emperor and several succeeding Ming emperors remained suspicious of overseas merchants and imposed severe restrictions on overseas trade.

Original Document

Let the state be small and the people be few.
There may be ten or even a hundred times as many implements,
But they should not be used.
Let the people, regarding death as a weighty matter,
Not travel far,
Though they have boats and carriages, none shall ride in them.
Though they have armor and weapons, none shall display them,
Let the people return once more to the use of knotted ropes.
Let them savor their food and find beauty in their clothing,
Peace in their dwellings and joy in their customs.
Though neighboring states are within site of one another,
And the sound of cocks and dogs audible
From one to the other,
People will reach old age and death
And yet not visit one another.

Original Document Source: Passage from *Daode jing*, in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2nd ed., Vol. 1, eds. William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

PRIMARY SOURCE ▶

4.9

Confucian Disdain for Zheng He's Voyages

The Ming court was divided into many factions. The powerful palace eunuchs were one such faction. They favored expansion, including the policies supporting Zheng He's voyages. The more traditional Confucian officials and court advisers saw such policies as wasteful. In 1477, one such official was the Confucian vice president of the Board of the War office. That year, he destroyed all of Zheng He's records, saying they were "deceitful exaggerations of bizarre things far removed from the testimony of people's eyes and ears." This passage is also from that official.

Original Document

The expeditions of San-pao [meaning "Three Jewels," as Zheng He was called] to the Western Ocean wasted tens of myriads of money and grain, and moreover the people who met their deaths may be counted in the myriads. Although he returned with wonderful precious things, what benefit was it to the state? This was merely an action of bad government of which ministers should severely disapprove.

Original Document Source: Official of the Ming court, quoted in Eric Ringmar, *The Mechanics of Modernity in Europe and East Asia: The Institutional Origins of Social Change and Stagnation* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

SECONDARY SOURCE ▶

4.10

Pirate Raids on China's Coast, 14th to 16th Centuries

This map shows the raiding patterns of Japanese pirates (wokou) from the 14th to the 16th centuries. They raided along the coasts of Japan, Korea, and Ming China. Over time, increasing numbers of these pirates were Chinese forced to engage in illegal activity because of Ming restrictions on merchants and overseas trading.

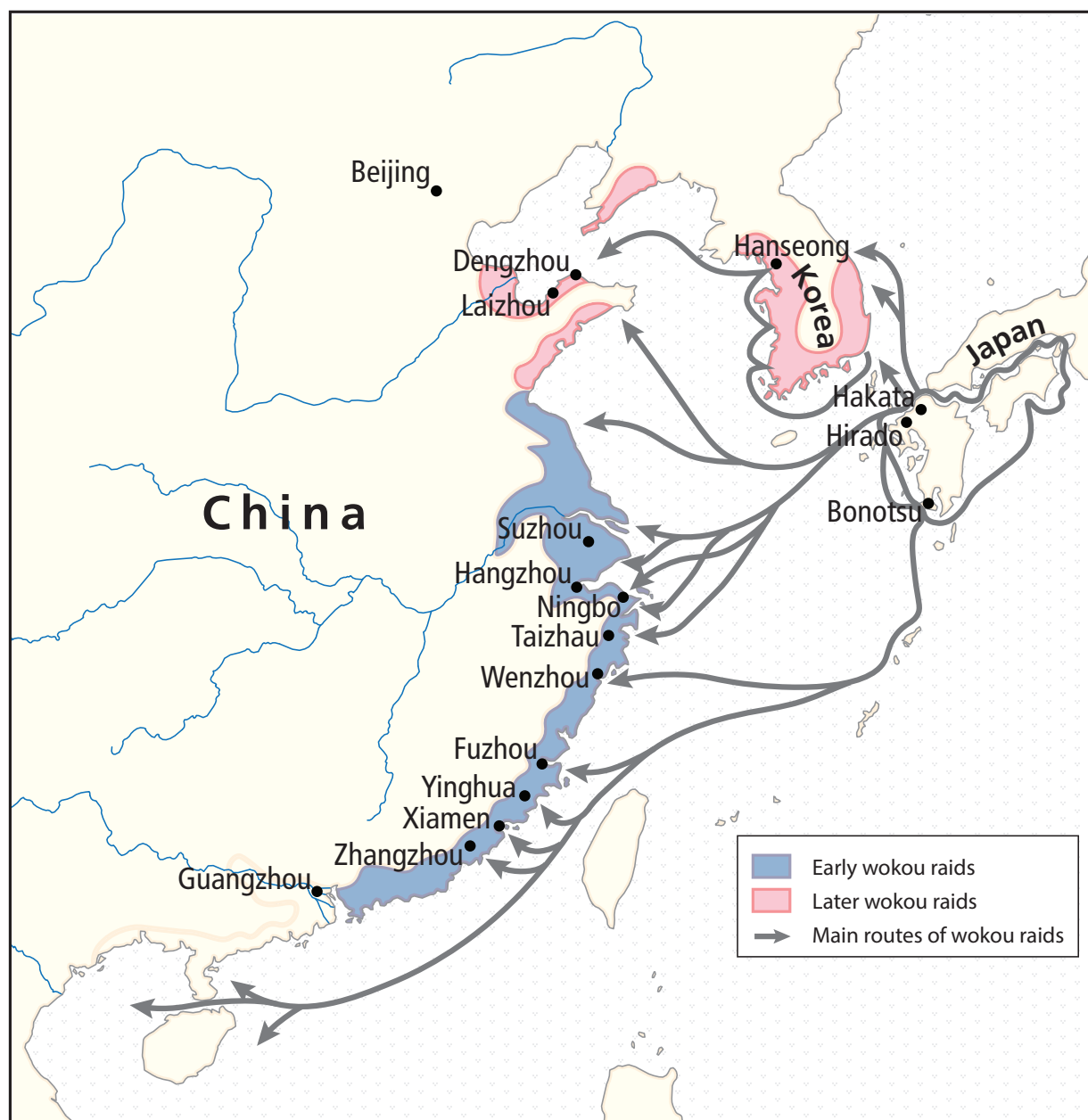


Image Source: © Yeu Ninje, based on Map 23 in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 7: *The Ming Dynasty 1368–1644, Part I*, eds. Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), CC BY-SA 3.0.

Communicating Results and Taking Action

Communicating Results

- ◆ Reread Primary Source 4.9. This is the 1477 comment of the Confucian vice president of the Board of the War. Pretend to be advisers to the Chinese emperor in 1477. Write a long letter to the emperor expressing your views about what the Board of War vice president has said about Zheng He and his voyages. In this letter, refer in detail to three of the sources for this lesson.
- ◆ Reread Primary Source 4.8. This is a passage from the *Tao Te Ching* (The Way and Its Power). It was a favorite of the first Ming emperor, the Hongwu emperor. It was this emperor's son, the Yongle emperor, who sent Zheng He on his voyages. Write a brief essay explaining why the Yongle emperor was or was not still following the philosophy of life expressed in the passage and in his father's rule.
- ◆ The teacher will separate students into small groups. Each group will find online, or in books, five artists' drawings, diagrams, or photos of models of Zheng He's treasure ships. Each group should do some research online to see what is and is not known about the size, shape, and capabilities of the treasure ships. The groups then should create brief presentations of their findings under the heading "What Is and Is Not Known about Zheng He's Treasure Ships."

Taking Action

- ◆ In recent years, a huge controversy has unfolded regarding Gavin Menzies's bestselling *1421: The Year China Discovered America*. The teacher will separate students into small groups. Each group will do research online regarding this book and the controversy it has sparked. Based on what your group discovers, compose a letter about the controversy to send to the AP College Board expressing the group's views on whether or not Menzies's theory about Zheng He deserves any treatment at all in the College Board's Advanced Placement history courses. The teacher will post these letters and have each group present its conclusions in an all-class discussion. The teacher might invite any other history classes in the school to attend this discussion.
- ◆ Based on the work in the previous assignment, each group should send its letter to those in charge of the College Board's Advanced Placement history courses. Each group will report back on any responses it gets and discuss these with the class.

The Voyages of Zheng He Rubric

Criteria	Unacceptable	Developing	Proficient	Excellent
Focus	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
Research	Refers to some sources but fails to connect these in a relevant way 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
Development and Use of Evidence	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
Content	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
Conventions	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 and Secondary Source Bibliography

- 4.1: © Vmenkov. Photograph of a replica treasure ship. CC BY-SA 3.0.
- 4.2: © Vmenkov. Map of Zheng He's routes. CC BY 1.0.
- 4.3: Polo, Marco. *The Travels of Marco Polo*. In *Science and Civilization in China*, by Joseph Needham. Vol. 4, Part 3. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971.
- 4.4: *Ming Shi* (History of Ming). In *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433*. Edited and translated by Edward L. Dreyer. New York: Pearson Longman, 2007.
- 4.5: He, Zheng. Inscription at Liujiagang. In *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433*. Edited and translated by Edward L. Dreyer. New York: Pearson Longman, 2007.
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- 4.7: Copy of Shen Du's *Tribute Giraffe with Attendant*. Public domain.
- 4.8: *Daode jing* (The Way and Its Power). In *Sources of Chinese Tradition*. Edited by William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom. 2nd ed., Vol. 1. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- 4.9: Ringmar, Eric. *The Mechanics of Modernity in Europe and East Asia: The Institutional Origins of Social Change and Stagnation*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- 4.10: © Yeu Ninje. *Map of pirate raids on China's coast from the 1300s to the 1500s*. CC BY-SA 3.0.

Sources for Further Study

Brezina, Corona. *Zheng He: China's Greatest Explorer, Mariner, and Navigator*. New York: Rosen Young Adult, 2017.

Dreyer, Edward L. *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2007.

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