

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Introduction to the Silk Road

Cartoonists draw or create cartoons for a variety of reasons. Some cartoons are meant to entertain viewers while others are meant to teach people about current events. There are many types of cartoons, such as political cartoons, comic strips, and animated cartoons. Cartoonists often work for newspapers, magazines, television studios, and gaming companies.

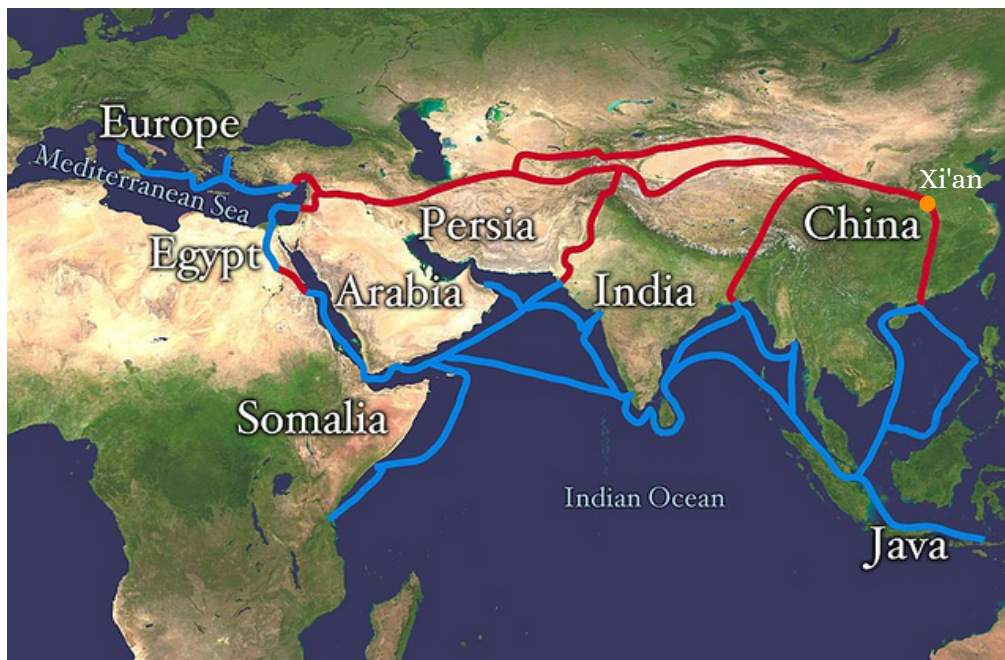
Some cartoonists create cartoons about historical events to provide commentary about what happened during a particular time. Cartoons are one of the strongest forms of expression and often provide insight into what people were feeling or thinking. For example, Dr. Seuss created many political cartoons during World War II. His cartoons aimed to portray the way American's felt about their enemies during the war.

Today, you will create a cartoon about an important topic in ancient Chinese history: the Silk Road. Your cartoon will explain how the Silk Road helped create a vast trade network that connected China to other parts of the world. Follow the steps below.

## Step 1: Learn about the Silk Road

Read about the Silk Road. Then, answer the questions.

The Silk Road was a network of trade routes that linked China to other parts of the world from 130 BCE-1453 CE. The Silk Road began at the city of Xi'an, in eastern China. The routes spanned over 4,000 miles through Asia, Northern Africa, and Europe. Take a look at the map below. The red routes go over land, including deserts and mountains. The blue routes go through water, including seas, oceans, and bays. The trade route received its name because of the silk fabric traders carried from China to cities and towns in the Middle East and Europe.



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## Who Started the Silk Road?

The Silk Road began during the Han Dynasty in China. A dynasty is a leadership structure in which descendants from one family rule for a long period of time. Power is passed from family member to family member. For example, when a ruler dies, the eldest son may become the new ruler.

The rulers of the Han dynasty were interested in expanding trade opportunities with other countries. Beginning in 130 BCE, the Han rulers officially opened trade with the west. The Han rulers wanted better horses for the Chinese army. People who lived in Central Asia raised the finest horses. The Chinese traded their silk for horses. At the time, the Chinese produced the finest silk in the world that was used for clothing, tablecloths, and wall hangings. These early trading efforts led to the beginning of the Silk Road.

## What Was Traveling the Silk Road Like?

To transport goods from one place to another, traders traveled in caravans. A caravan is a group of people and animals that traveled together. The roads were often very dangerous. They had to be on the lookout for pirates and bandits. Therefore, traders traveled in groups to protect themselves from potential thieves. Traders were also faced with extremely high temperatures coupled with sandstorms and rough mountainous terrain covered in snow and ice.

Because the journey was long, caravans often stopped at places called caravanserais. Caravanserais are similar to today's truck stops near a highway. At the caravanserai, traders had a place to rest and eat. Caravanserais in the Middle East had mosques so people could worship. Traders' camels and horses were also fed. Many caravanserais also had markets for traders to meet and trade with other travelers.

## What Goods Were Traded?

The types of goods traded differed depending on where they came from. Goods from the east came from China, India, and the Middle East. Goods from the west came from different parts of Europe or North Africa. Look at the chart below to see where different kinds of goods originated from and where they were traded to on the Silk Road.

From West to East		From East to West	
• Horses	• Camels	• Silk	• Ivory
• Saddles, bridles for horses	• Slaves	• Tea	• Rice
• Grapevines and grapes	• Weapons and armor	• Dyes	• Paper
• Dogs		• Precious Stones	• Gunpowder
• Animal furs and skins		• China (plates, bowls, cups, vases)	
• Honey		• Porcelain	
• Fruits such as figs, oranges		• Spices (such as cinnamon and ginger)	
• Glassware		• Bronze and gold	
• Woolen blankets, rugs, carpets		• Medicines	
• Gold and Silver		• Perfumes	

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Answer the questions using complete sentences.

1. Was the Silk Road an actual road? Explain your reasoning.

2. In what area did the Silk Road originate and why was it named the Silk Road?

3. List 5 goods that were traded on the Silk Road and where they originated from.

4. Why did traders travel in caravans? What made travel on the Silk Road difficult?

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## Step 2: Create a Cartoon

Fill in the information below to create a cartoon about the Silk Road.

### Choose a Purpose

Artists create cartoons for different reasons. Choose a reason from the list below. Check the box under your choice.



Teach others about a topic



Provide an opinion on a topic



Provide entertainment

\_\_\_\_\_  
Other (Another idea you have) For example, your cartoon might convince people to buy replicas of artifacts that were found the Silk Road.

### Choose an Audience

The audience refers to the people who will be looking at your cartoon. Choose an audience from the list below. Check the box next to your choice.

- Students
- Teachers
- Historians
- Consumers
- Other (come up with another audience) \_\_\_\_\_

### Choose a tone

The tone of your cartoon should be appropriate for the audience you chose and the purpose of your cartoon. Check the box next to your choice.

- Funny
- Serious
- Informative
- Dramatic
- Other (come up with another tone) \_\_\_\_\_

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## Brainstorm Ideas

Brainstorm ideas for your cartoon by filling out the information below.

Does your cartoon have characters? If so, describe them.

Where does your cartoon take place? Describe the setting.

What event(s) happen in your cartoon? List the events below.

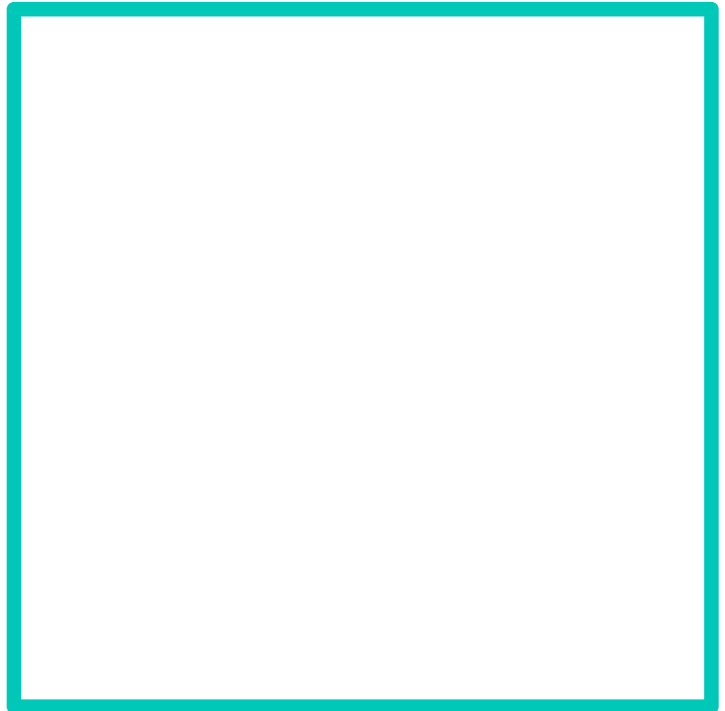
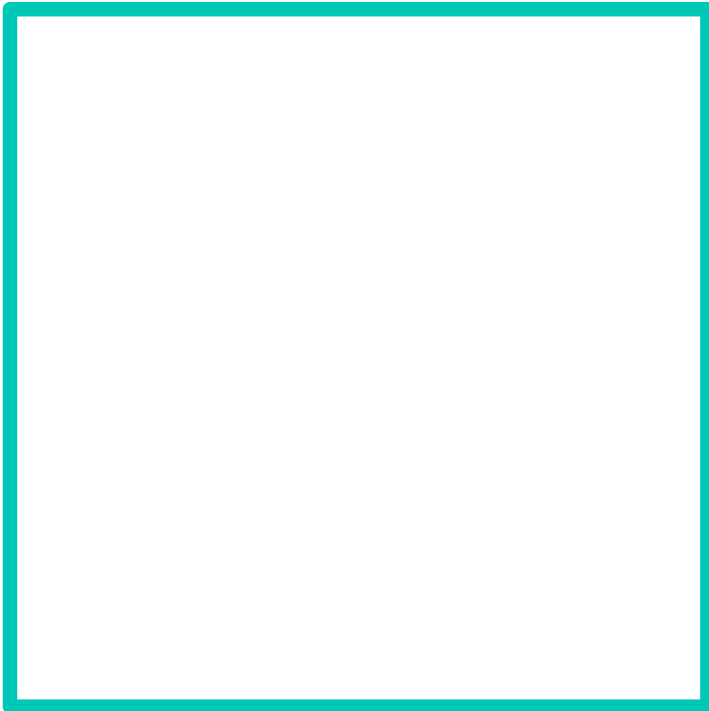
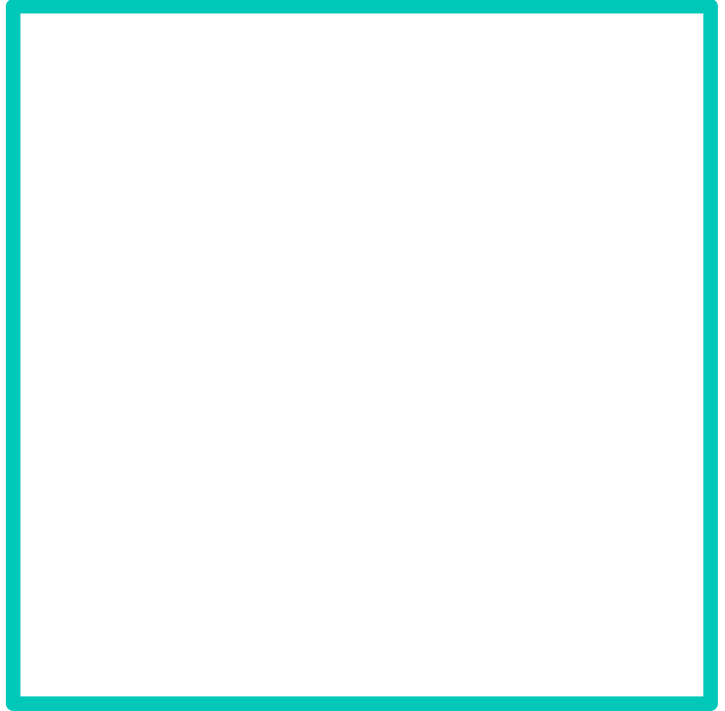
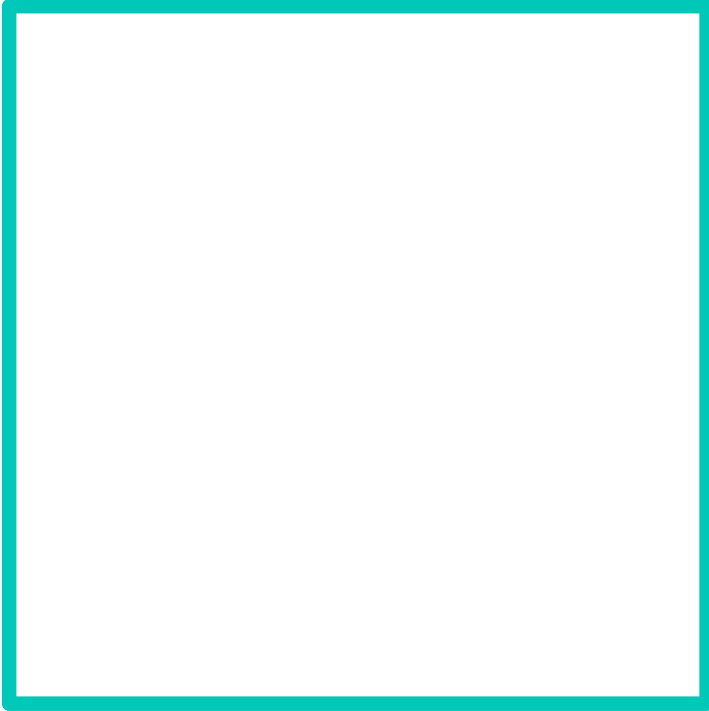
What images and words do you want to use in your cartoon?  
For example, do you want to use speech bubbles?

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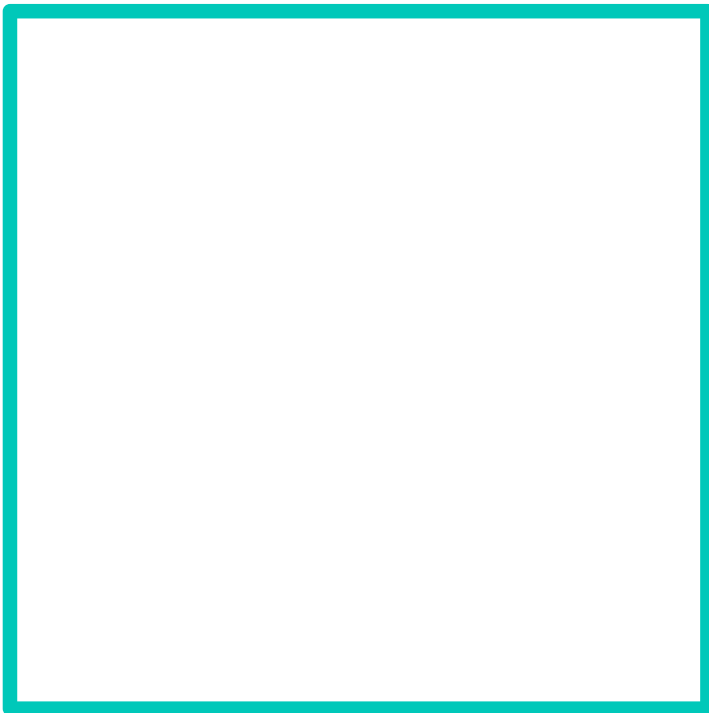
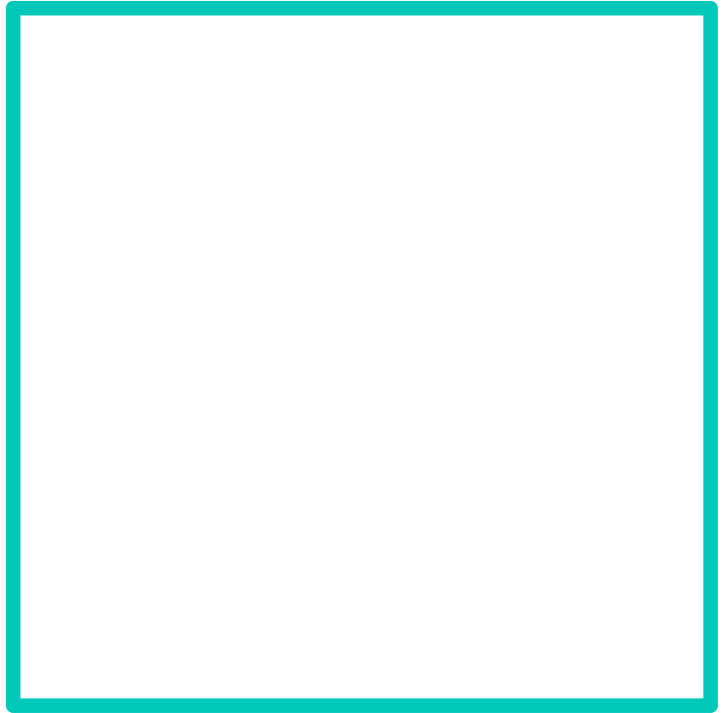
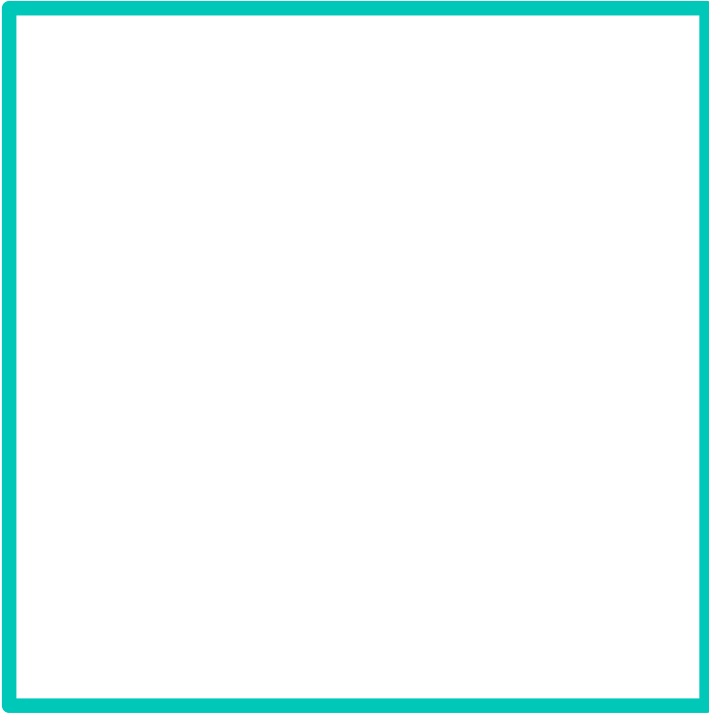
## Create Your Cartoon

Create your cartoon on the panels on the following pages or on a computer.



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