

Handout #1

Miles to Go Before I Sleep: Two Great Adventurers, Battuta and Polo, Affect the Medieval World

When you take a trip or a vacation, how do you record what you did? You probably take pictures, perhaps even a video recording; you send postcards or e-mails to your family and friends about your travels; you might keep a journal to record events as they happen; and you probably bring back souvenirs to show your family and friends. Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo traveled in a time around the 13th and 14th Centuries when recording events was not as easy as it is today. Upon their return to their homes, both Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo recorded their adventures. Both of their stories were very influential, stimulating trade and travel in the regions they wrote about.

Ibn Battuta's desire to see the lands where his fellow Muslims lived led him across Asia, Africa, and Europe and the seas between. His nearly thirty years of travel began when he was twenty-one when he set off for a pilgrimage to Mecca, and after that, he traveled over 75,000 miles. Ibn Battuta traveled by joining trading caravans. Caravans were bands of travelers who journeyed together for security and mutual aid. He told of his adventures when he returned home to Morocco, and those who heard thought his stories should be written down. The sultan of Morocco commissioned a young court secretary named Ibn Juzayy to listen to Ibn Battuta's stories and record them. It took two years to write everything down, and when they were finished, the result was the Rihla, a story of travels centered on a pilgrimage. The Rihla was an inspiration to other Muslims to make a hajj, or pilgrimage, to Mecca. Battuta's stories also taught other Muslims about places, cultural practices, and religious events in the 14th Century Islamic world.

The Rihla not only helped people in Ibn Battuta's time to know the world better, but today it is still giving us insights into the world of Africa, Asia, and Europe in the 1300's. Geographers consider Ibn Battuta one of the earliest geographers.

Unlike Ibn Battuta who left home for religious reasons, the Italian Marco Polo left home seeking trade opportunities. His father and uncle, jewel merchants, had spent time at the court of Kublai Khan, the Mongol ruler of China, and took the young Marco with them for a return trip. Khan immediately liked Marco, and sent him on diplomatic missions throughout his empire. Marco spent 17 years in Khan's service, traveling a great deal all over China, and he acquired great wealth in jewels and gold.

Handout #1, page 2

Much like Ibn Battuta, upon his return after twenty-four years away from home, Marco Polo began telling stories of his adventures. A young writer named Rustichello recorded Marco's travels in a book called *The Travels of Marco Polo*, considered to be one of the most famous travel books in history.

Some scholars doubt whether Marco's accounts in fact happened. These scholars think he got his information from traders he met. It does not matter, though, because Marco's biggest achievement is the affect his book had on European readers. His travelogue was the most influential one written about the Silk Road. His system of measuring distances was remarkably accurate, and map makers and explorers looked to it for information about Asian regions. Merchants used his book for planning commercial ventures. Sailors studied it to seek a route to India in the 15th century. One important sailor, Christopher Columbus, relied heavily on Polo's geography when he planned his voyage to sail west from Europe to reach Asian markets.

On his death bed, Marco said that he had "only told half of what I saw, because no one would have believed me." For Ibn Battuta, traveling "leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller."

These two Medieval travelers, the Moroccan Ibn Battuta, and the Italian Marco Polo, although leaving their homes for different reasons, both greatly influenced travel and trade of the people who heard and read their stories.

Handout 2 Worksheet Practice with Miles & Kilometers

- Ibn Battuta traveled between Beijing and Guangzhou. This distance was 1,300 miles. Which is the best estimate of the distance he traveled between Tangier and Tunis?
 - 2,000 miles
 - 1,300 miles
 - 1,000 miles
 - 500 miles
- Marco Polo also traveled between these same cities of Beijing and Guangzhou, but on his map it is in kilometers, and he went 2,090. Which is the best ESTIMATE of the distance Marco Polo traveled between Constantinople and Tabriz?
 - 2,090 kilometers
 - 1,500 kilometers
 - 1,000 kilometers
 - 500 kilometers
- What is the estimate of the shortest distance Battuta went between Marrakech and Timbuktu?
 - 2,000 miles
 - 1,800 miles
 - 1,500 miles
 - 1,200 miles
- Approximately how far did Polo travel between Sumatra and Yanzhou?
 - 3,000 kilometers
 - 2,000 kilometers
 - 4,500 kilometers
 - 6,000 kilometers
- Marco Polo went from Venice to Jerusalem; Ibn Battuta went from Constantinople to Delhi. Which traveler went the greater distance? How did you find your answer (include your estimates of the travels of each man)?

- Ibn Battuta went from Bakhura to Calicut. Marco Polo traveled from Venice to Acre. Who traveled the greater distance? How did you find your answer (include your estimates of the travels of each man)?

- Measure the distance Marco Polo traveled from Layas to Tabriz. Approximately how many miles is that distance?
- Measure the distance Ibn Battuta traveled through the Red Sea from Mecca to Kilwa. Approximately how many kilometers is that distance?

Handout 3

Assessment Questions based on map skills and reading about Battuta and Polo

1. Ibn Battuta left his home in Morocco and kept traveling for the next 29 years. What was his original purpose in leaving his home?
 - a. He wanted to study other religions.
 - b. He wanted to write a book about his faith, Islam.
 - c. He wanted to go on a holy pilgrimage to Mecca.
 - d. He wanted to set up a trade route.

2. Marco Polo left his home in Venice, Italy, and was away from his home for 24 years. What was Polo's purpose?
 - a. He wanted to research about China for a book.
 - b. He wanted to get valuable silks and jewels from East Asia.
 - c. He wanted to draw maps of Asia.
 - d. He wanted to escape his cruel mother.

3. Ibn Battuta's story, the Rihla
 - a. influenced other Muslims to make a hajj.
 - b. helped the Islamic world understand other places and cultures.
 - c. helped map the regions of Africa, Asia, and Europe.
 - d. All of the above

4. Marco Polo's story
 - a. was the most influential one written about the Silk Road.
 - b. tells about Mongol and Chinese society during the 13th Century.
 - c. helped trading merchants plan their ventures.
 - d. All of the above

5. One of the most important effects of Marco Polo's travels was
 - a. Christopher Columbus relied heavily on Polo's geography when he planned his own voyage to Asian markets.
 - b. silk, spices, tea, and salt were introduced to the Medieval European markets.
 - c. Medieval Europeans learned about the Great Wall of China and about Chinese customs.

6. What is the best estimate of the distance Marco Polo traveled between Tabriz and Sumatra?
 - a. 25,000 km
 - b. 20,000 km
 - c. 15,000 km
 - d. 8,000 km

7. What is the best estimate of the distance Ibn Battuta traveled between Tabriz and Baghdad?
 - a. 550 miles
 - b. 400 miles
 - c. 300 miles
 - d. 250 miles

8. Estimate the distance traveled by each man and decide which traveler covered the greater distance, and explain how you arrived at your answer. Include the estimates you made about the distances traveled.

Ibn Battuta traveled from Tangier to Cairo.

Marco Polo traveled from Venice to Acre.

9. Marco Polo went from Tabriz to Shangdou. How far is that in kilometers and miles?

10. Ibn Battuta traveled from Kabul to Delhi. How far is that in both miles and kilometers?

Key for Handout 3 Assessment

Questions assessing the geography reading:

1. c
2. b
3. d
4. d
5. a

Questions assessing math:

6. d
7. b
8. Ibn Battuta traveled further in this case; he went approximately 2,600 miles and Marco Polo went approximately 2,600 km. Miles are greater than kilometers, so in this case, Ibn traveled the greater distance.
9. From Tabriz to Shangdou is approximately 6,700 km or approximately 4,020 miles.
10. From Kabul to Delhi is approximately 700 miles or approximately 1,120 km.

Key for Handout 2 Worksheet Practice with Miles & Kilometers

1. C
2. B
3. C
4. D
5. Ibn Battuta went further; he traveled approximately 3100 miles while Marco Polo traveled approximately 3000 km. Kilometers are shorter than miles, so Ibn Battuta went the greater distance in this problem.
6. Ibn Battuta went further again; he went approximately 2300 miles and Marco Polo traveled approximately 2200 km. Miles are longer than km, so Battuta went a greater distance.
7. The distance is approximately 1,000 km, or approximately 600 miles.
8. The distance is approximately 3,000 miles, or approximately 4,800 km.