

Marco Polo

Teacher's notes

Level:	Upper Intermediate +
Topic:	Marco Polo
Subject(s):	History
Time (approx):	Activity 1: 15 - 25 minutes. Activity 2: 10 - 20 minutes. Activity 3: 10 - 20 minutes

Preparation: Activities 1, 2 & 3: Photocopy one set of questions for each student and one copy of the texts for every two students cut up as indicated.

Note: The worksheets below are as historically accurate as possible. There is some argument over much of Marco Polo's life, including whether he actually ever went to China! As far as possible, only information that is generally accepted as true has been included.

Procedure

Activity 1

1. On the board write *Marco Polo* and ask students what they know about this person.
2. Put students in pairs.
3. Hand out a copy of Activity 1 to each student.
4. Ask students to discuss the six statements.
5. Next, give one student in every pair text A and one student in every pair text B.
6. Tell students to read their text, but NOT to show it to their partner.
7. After they have read their texts, tell them to discuss the six statements again.
8. Encourage them to do this without looking back at the texts.
9. Monitor and help where necessary.
10. Check the answers as a class.

Note: You might want to tell your students that although all the sentences look as if they could be true, in fact three are true and three are false.

Key

1. False - He was a merchant.
2. True
3. False - His father and uncle were first.
4. True
5. True
6. False - The book was written by someone else (Rustichello da Pisa).

Activity 2

1. Tell students to read their text again, more carefully this time.
2. Monitor and help where necessary (e.g. explaining any new words or the meaning of certain sentences).
3. Put students in pairs (one A with one B) – These might be the same pairs as for Activity 1 or a new pairing.
4. Hand out a copy of Activity 2 to each student.
5. Ask them to discuss the significance of the words and numbers with their partner without referring back to the texts (if possible).
6. Monitor.
7. Check the answers as a class.

Key

- a) The name given to China in Marco Polo's time.
- b) The name of the Emperor of Cathay (China).
- c) The age Marco Polo was when he started his journey.
- d) The name of Marco Polo's father.
- e) The desert that Marco crossed. The gateway to China.
- f) The year Marco Polo was born.
- g) The old name of Istanbul. Where Niccolo Polo lived when Marco was young.
- h) The year Marco Polo left China.
- i) The name of the man who wrote a book about Marco Polo's journey.

Activity 3

1. Hand out a copy of Activity 3 to each student.
2. Ask them to read through the questions and try and answer them with their partner.
3. Explain that once they've tried to answer the questions, they should read through their texts again checking their answers.
4. Tell them they can stop and show their partner any relevant information from their text this time.
5. Monitor and help where necessary.
6. Check the answers as a class.

Key

1. Three and a half years.
2. 1269
3. *The Description of the World.*
4. Bukhara
5. South of the Black Sea, across Persia, north through Afghanistan and then across the Gobi Desert.
6. Because he lived in Constantinople and was a trader travelling a lot.
7. 24
8. Because there was a war.

Useful websites

One of the problems with websites (and books) about Marco Polo is that no two sites have the same information. As with most historical figures, there is some guess work as to what really happened.

www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/polo_marco.shtml

Brief web page from the BBC.

www.silk-road.com/artl/marcopolo.shtml

Lots of details and interesting information, but the text is full of grammar and spelling mistakes!!

www.tk421.net/essays/polo.html

A long detailed essay on Marco Polo which contains some interesting background information on the period.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marco_Polo

Probably the best of these four web pages. However, they do seem to prefer to use modern day spellings and names for places!