

## Teacher's Guide for Calliope: *Marco Polo*

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Teacher's Guide prepared by Lois Sepahban, M.A. Lois has taught students of all ages from kindergarten to high school. She teaches and writes in California.

### Marco Milione (p. 2-3)

#### Activity

You read in this article that Marco Polo left Venice with his father and uncle on a merchant trip, and that he didn't return for over twenty years. Imagine you take a trip that unintentionally lasts over twenty years. How would you announce your return home to your old friends? Would you host a lavish dinner party for everyone at once as the Polos did? What changes do you imagine will have taken place during your absence? Brainstorm a few ideas, and then write your thoughts in your journal.

### Marco's City (p. 4-7)

#### Reading for Understanding

1. What square lies at the center of Venice? *Piazza San Marco, or St. Mark's Square*
2. What buildings surround this square? *The old and new law courts, St. Mark's Basilica, Clock Tower, Bell Tower*
3. Why was St. Mark's Basilica built? *To hold the remains of the Christian St. Mark*
4. Describe St. Mark's Basilica. *Designed in the form of a Greek cross, one central dome, four smaller domes over each apse, four bronze horses, covered with mosaics and sculptures, golden altarpiece*
5. What is the Piazzetta? *A smaller square that extends down St. Mark's Basin*
6. Who are the two patron saints of Venice, and what are their symbols? *St. Teodoro is represented by a crocodile, St. Mark is represented by a winged lion*
7. What buildings are on the sides of the Piazzetta? *The Old Library, the Doges' Palace*
8. What is the Doges' Palace? *Residence of the doges, the former seat of government*
9. How did the Bridge of Sighs get its name? *It was named for the cries the prisoners made when they looked out the bridge's windows to see the city*

#### Activity

Pretend you are a travel agent. Choose one of the sites described in this article, and create a poster. Include information presented here, as well as internet research. Use pictures and symbols to illustrate your poster.

### Venice's Doges (p. 5)

#### Activity

You read in this article that the Latin word for leader is *dux*, or *doge* in the Venetian dialect. What are some other words people use for their leaders? Fill in the chart below.

Title	Meaning	Country/Region
President	(someone elected to preside)	(many, including United

	over a group of people)	States, Mexico, France)
Prime Minister	(the head minister in a parliamentary system)	(many, including United Kingdom, Japan, India, Ireland, Turkey)
King or Queen	(monarch)	(many, especially in the past, including United Kingdom)
Kaiser	(emperor, comes from Caesar)	Germany, Austria
Czar	(emperor or king, comes from Caesar)	Russia

### Trade Links East and West (p. 8-9)

Reading for Understanding

1. What goods did traders hope to bring from the East? *Silk, porcelain, spices, textiles, pearls and gems, ivory, gold, feathers, horses, frankincense*
2. What threats existed to trade sea routes? *Pirates and bandits, winds (or lack of wind)*

Activity

Label the following places on a blank map of the world: Venice, India, China, Sumatra, Samudra, Calicut, the Strait of Malacca, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean Sea, the Nile River, Aden, Aydhab, Egypt, and Alexandria.

Draw lines to show the trade sea routes between Venice and India and China.

### Pepper's Appeal (p. 8-9)

Activity

You have read about the value of eastern spices to western people. Choose a spice from the list below and work in small groups to create a brochure to advertise its history and uses. Include information about where it is grown and how it is harvested, as well as pictures to show its appearance.

Spice list: cinnamon, ginger, saffron, mustard, cloves, nutmeg

### At Work for the Khan (p. 10-12)

Reading for Understanding

1. What mission did Kublai Khan give Marco Polo's father and uncle? *To bring 100 Christian men from the pope to convince him of the power of their God*
2. Whom did the Polos finally bring him? *21-year-old Marco*
3. What job did Kublai Khan give to Marco Polo? *Advisor and tax collector*
4. What did Marco Polo see in his travels for Kublai Khan? *Different types of currency, animals and plants like bamboo and rhinoceroses, tattoos, and beautiful cities like Quinsai (Hangzhou) in China*

Activity

Pretend you are traveling alongside Marco Polo as he completes his work for Kublai Khan. What would interest you most? Strange plants and animals? New food? Beautiful architecture? Fascinating people? Write a scene you witness, using descriptive language. Focus on your five senses as you write—sights, smells, sounds, tastes, textures.

### **Who Were the Mongols (p. 14-15)**

Reading for Understanding

1. Where is Mongolia? *A high plateau between the Tannu-Ola Mountains in the north and the Altai range in the southwest*
2. What is the land like in Mongolia? *Dry, good for grazing horses, extreme temperatures (hot in summer, cold in winter)*
3. Describe the Mongol cavalry. *Could travel quickly, used special bows, good at attacking and tricking their enemies*
4. What religions do Mongols practice today? *Tibetan Buddhism and Islam*

### **The "Yam" as Glue (p. 16-17)**

Reading for Understanding

1. What is the yam? *The postal system established by Genghis Khan*
2. How did the yam work? *10,000 stations with 300,000 horses located 25-40 miles apart where travelers could change horses and get the latest news*
3. Who could use the yam stations? *Travelers who had official tablets of authority called p'ai-tzu*
4. What were the four classes of people in the Mongol Empire? *Mongols at the top, then Se-mu-jen who served in trade and administration, then Han-jen who were the lower middle class, finally Nan-jen at the bottom*
5. What kinds of taxes did non-Mongols have to pay? *Sales tax, freight tax, land tax, and poll tax*

### **Modes of Travel (p. 18-21)**

Reading for Understanding

1. What was the most efficient way to travel on land during the Middle Ages? *On foot, or in camel caravans in deserts*
2. What was the slowest way to travel? *Wagons*
3. What were the pros and cons of travel with horses? *They could travel faster than people on foot, but they had to rest every and be fed every four or five hours*
4. How did people travel on the water during the Middle Ages? *Ferryboats, ships, galleys*
5. What hazards did travelers face during the Middle Ages? *Bad weather, floods, warfare, disease*
6. What was the Pax Mongolica? *A time of peace in Central Asia during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries*

### **Polo's Princess (p. 24-25)**

Reading for Understanding

1. Why were the Polos unable to return to Venice when they wanted? *They needed a p'ai-tzu from Kublai Khan and he didn't want the Polos to leave*

2. Why were the Polos asked to accompany Princess Cocachin to Persia? *They knew the land and the sea and would be good guides*
3. How long did it take the group to travel from Asia to Persia? *Three years*

### **Who Was Prester John (p. 28-31)**

Reading for Understanding

1. Who did Prester John claim to be? *A ruler of a kingdom "in the three Indias", wealthy, Christian*
2. Who was Prester John really? *Ye-la Ta-shih, a Chinese prince*

### **Jailed (p. 32)**

Activity

You read in this article that Rustichello added events and descriptions to Marco Polo's stories that weren't true. Rustichello exaggerated actual details, making Marco Polo's adventures seem larger than life. Take a real event from your life—your last birthday party, the first day of school, a dance recital, a music lesson, etc.—and write about it, adding made-up descriptions and exaggerated details. Include a fabulous illustration.

### **Best Seller (p. 33-35)**

Reading for Understanding

1. What is the likely reason that Marco Polo was in a prison in Genoa? *Venice and Genoa were at war, so he was probably captured from a merchant ship*
2. How did Rustichello write Marco Polo's story? *He wrote it with a quill pen and ink on vellum or paper*
3. What languages were early manuscripts of Marco Polo's book translated into? *Franco-Italian, French, Latin, Venetian, Tuscan, German, Aragonese, Czech, Irish Gaelic*
4. Why was Marco Polo's book so popular? *It had the first descriptions of many places, like China and Japan, in the West; it provided accurate geographical information*

### **According to the Tombstones (p. 36-37)**

Activity

The Chinese craftsmen who carved the tombstones of Katerina and Antonio used symbols that represented their names. Think of your name. Write it out on a strip of paper. What symbols tell others something about your name? What stories do you know about your name? Decorate your name strip with symbols and images.

### **Travelers' Tales (p. 39-41)**

Discussion

Some scholars have questioned whether or not Marco Polo and John Mandeville ever made the trips they claim to have made. For certain, even if they did make the trips, they included a great deal of untruths in their stories. Does it matter if they lied about taking the trips? Does it matter if they lied about details in the stories? Think of examples of modern celebrities who are caught

lying or cheating—singers who don't really sing, writers who write memoirs that never happened. Does it matter if they lie? Why or why not?

### **Culminating Activity**

Create an illustrated time line of Marco Polo's life using the information given on the time line on page 27. Each even should be illustrated using hand-drawn pictures or internet images.