

**Fact or Fiction?**

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

Below is a passage on Marco Polo and the Silk Road. On the following page is a chart with ten statements. Indicate whether each statement is fact or fiction.

Marco Polo was an Italian explorer. His well-documented travels to China were some of the most influential in world history, and did much to kickstart the European age of exploration.

## **Introduction**

Marco Polo was born in Venice, Italy on September 15, 1254. His father and uncle were prosperous merchants who already begun trading with Chinese and Eastern merchants. Because of the constant threat of war, the Polos left Venice and eventually settled in what is now Uzbekistan. The move east to Uzbekistan made trading with China and the East much easier. In 1264, Marco's father Nicolo, and uncle, Maffio set out on a two-year long journey to meet Kublai Khan, the emperor of China in what is now Beijing. According to the account of Marco Polo, Kublai Khan received them well and requested they come back to teach the Chinese people Christianity and western customs.

## **Marco Polo's Descriptions of China and the Silk Road**

In 1271, the Polo's set out to return to China. This time, they took Marco with them. The four-year voyage across western and central Asia was long and arduous. After traveling by sea to the Persian Gulf, the Polo's were forced to take an ancient caravan route through present day Iraq, Iran, and Turkmenistan. They then traversed the desolate Gobi Desert, and made their way through several ancient mercantile cities. In the spring of 1275, the Polos finally reached Shangdu, the summer residence of Kublai Khan. The route taken by the Polos became known as The Silk Road. Kublai Khan and his royal court immediately took a liking to Marco and appointed him commissioner in the Mongol government. In the meantime, Marco studied the native languages and culture. Marco soon became a trusted advisor to Kublai Khan and began recording his observations of the great ruler and his vast territories, palaces, arms, and riches. Marco described the vast Asian trading network and, in particular, the thriving silk, iron, and salt industries. He also described the foreign concept of paper money as well as Chinese inventions such as porcelain pottery (China) and paperback books. Marco wrote that Khan's city (known as Cambuluc) was the most fantastic city in the world. When Marco's descriptions reached Europe, a new generation of explorers was born who imagined amazing fortune for themselves in the East. Marco remained with Kublai Khan for seventeen years and recorded his observations throughout China. His recordings of a culture completely unknown in Europe proved priceless.

## Marco's Journal is Published

In 1292, the Polos finally traveled home. The voyage took three years and took the Polos to the Spice Islands (Indonesia), where Marco described the exotic sights and amazing resources. After he returned to Italy, Marco was imprisoned during a clash between Venice and Genoa. While in prison, Marco dictated his observations to a fellow prisoner. His descriptions were soon published as a book called "Il Milione", or, The Travels of Marco Polo. The book became a huge success and undoubtedly inspired future explorers such as Christopher Columbus. Marco Polo died in 1324.

	FACT	FICTION
Marco Polo grew up in poverty.		
According to the passage, Kublai Khan was fond of the Polo family and wanted them to come back to teach the people Christianity.		
On the way to China, the Polos traveled through the Persian Gulf, Gobi Desert, and much of western and central Asia.		
The route the Polos took to China would eventually become known as the Silk Road.		
Kublai Khan gave Marco Polo a position in the Mongol government.		
Marco Polo noted that China had established an incredible network of gold and silver mines.		
Marco Polo wrote that Shangdu was the most fantastic city in the world.		
Marco Polo's travels inspired a new generation of explorers who imagined great treasure for themselves.		
Marco Polo did not actually write "The Travels of Marco Polo."		
By 1290, Marco Polo was back in his home.		

**Answers:**

	<b>FACT</b>	<b>FICTION</b>
Marco Polo grew up in poverty.		<b>X</b>
According to the passage, Kublai Khan was fond of the Polo family and wanted them to come back to teach the people Christianity.	<b>X</b>	
On the way to China, the Polos traveled through the Persian Gulf, Gobi Desert, and much of western and central Asia.	<b>X</b>	
The route the Polos took to China would eventually become known as the Silk Road.	<b>X</b>	
Kublai Khan gave Marco Polo a position in the Mongol government.	<b>X</b>	
Marco Polo noted that China has established an incredible network of gold and silver mines.		<b>X</b>
Marco Polo wrote that Shangdu was the most fantastic city in the world.		<b>X</b>
Marco Polo's writings inspired a new generation of explorers who imagined great treasure for themselves.	<b>X</b>	
Marco Polo did not actually write "The Travels of Marco Polo."	<b>X</b>	
By 1290, Marco Polo was back in his home.		<b>X</b>