Name _____ Date _____

The Silk Road: Goods and Ideas on the Move

Directions: Read the passage about the Silk Road, then answer the questions. Several of them ask you to sum up what a paragraph or the whole passage is mostly about.

The Silk Road

Roads of Silk and Ideas

From about 130 BCE until the late Middle Ages, trade routes linked China with Central Asia, India, Persia and the lands around the Mediterranean Sea. Today we call them the Silk Road, but the name can mislead. It was not one road but a network of routes over land and sea. And the name is modern: a German geographer, Ferdinand von Richthofen, made it popular in 1877.

In 138 BCE, the Han dynasty of China sent an envoy named Zhang Qian west. Zhang Qian's journeys helped the Han build trade ties with western lands. Chinese silk traveled west and became prized in Rome. Horses, glass, wool, gold and silver traveled east. Spices, jade and paper were traded too.

Few traders traveled the whole way. Instead, goods passed from hand to hand. A merchant might carry silk to an oasis town, a place with water in the desert, sell it there and turn back. Another trader would carry it farther. Inns called caravanserais gave travelers and their camels a safe place to rest.

Ideas moved along the same routes. Buddhism, which began in India, spread into Central Asia and China, starting around the first century CE. Monks, pilgrims and merchants carried its teachings. At Dunhuang, an oasis town in western China, merchants who grew rich from trade helped pay for Buddhist cave temples. Papermaking, which began in China, spread west to the Islamic world by the 700s CE and later reached Europe. Paper made it easier to record and share knowledge.

1. Why can the name "Silk Road" mislead readers?

A. Zhang Qian gave the routes this name in 138 BCE.
B. No silk was ever traded on these routes.
C. It was one stone road built by the Romans.
D. It was a network of many routes over land and sea, not one road.

2. What did the Han dynasty do in 138 BCE?

A. Sent Zhang Qian west as an envoy
B. Named the routes the Silk Road
C. Brought Buddhism from Rome to China
D. Built caravanserais across Europe

3. Which goods traveled east toward China?

A. Only silk
B. Silk and papermaking
C. Nothing, because trade went only west
D. Horses, glass, wool, gold and silver

4. Why were oasis towns important places along the routes?

A. They were where the routes got the name Silk Road.

B. They had water in the desert and were places where goods changed hands.

C. They were ports where ships from Rome landed.

D. They were the only places where silk was made.

5. What is the main point of the paragraph that begins "Few traders traveled the whole way"?

A. Silk was sold only in oasis towns.

B. Caravanserais were the largest buildings in Asia.

C. Goods usually passed through many traders instead of one trader carrying them all the way.

D. Camels were the only animals that could cross deserts.

6. Complete the sentences about where two ideas began.

Word bank
China • Persia • India • Rome

Buddhism began in _____ and spread into China. Papermaking began in _____ and spread west.

7. At Dunhuang, merchants who grew rich from trade helped pay for Buddhist cave temples. What does this detail best show?

A. Dunhuang was a city in the Roman Empire.

B. Trade and religion were connected along the routes.

C. Merchants had no interest in religion.

D. Buddhism began at Dunhuang.

8. According to the passage, why did the spread of papermaking matter?

A. Paper was first made in Europe.

B. Paper made it easier to record and share knowledge.

C. Paper ended the need for trade.

D. Paper replaced silk as China's most valuable good.

9. Which summary of the passage is the most complete and accurate?

A. One Chinese road carried silk straight to Rome, where Buddhism began.

B. From about 130 BCE, a network of routes linked China with lands to the west. Goods passed through many traders, and ideas such as Buddhism and papermaking spread along the way.

C. The Silk Road was the most exciting thing in history, and every trader loved it.

D. A German geographer made the name Silk Road popular in 1877.

10. A student is writing a short summary of the passage. Which detail is least important to include?

A. The routes linked China with lands to the west.

B. Few traders traveled the whole way.

C. Buddhism and papermaking spread along the routes.

D. Inns along the routes were called caravanserais.