

Descriptive Essay: The Silk Road

Introduction:

Centuries before the internet and airplanes, the great Silk Road connected many people from different parts of the world. It got its name from the valuable silk fabric which was transported on it from China to West Asia and Europe (Smith, 2013). Traders first started to use it about 2000 years ago; they mostly travelled in camel caravans because some parts of the route were very dangerous. This 8000 km long trading route between east and west played a very important part in world history. In this essay I will describe the origins of the route, explain its historical significance, and discuss its decline.

Which underlined word means:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| usually _____ | extremely _____ |
| linked _____ | various _____ |
| expensive _____ | businessmen _____ |
| importance _____ | beginning _____ |
| hundreds of years _____ | approximately _____ |

Body Paragraph 1:

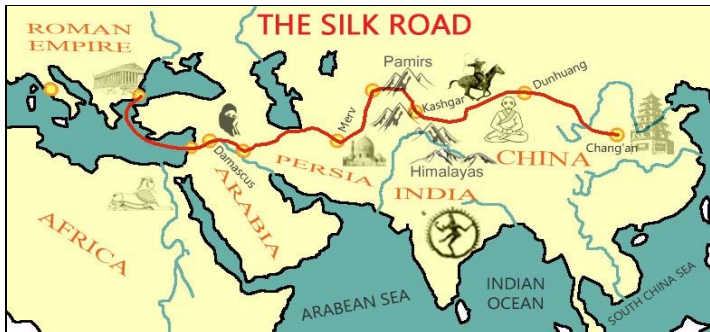
The great mountains of Asia, such as the Himalayas, form a **barrier** between China and the western part of Asia which was extremely difficult to cross in ancient times. However, in the 2nd century BC the Chinese **emperor** ordered a **diplomat** named Zhang Qian to find a Chinese **tribe** which had previously moved west. After years of travelling over mountains and deserts Zhang Qian finally reached them in Central Asia. He was amazed at what he saw: in the Fergana valley in Uzbekistan, for example, there were more than 70 cities with well-developed **crafts**, trade and **agriculture** (Great Routes, 2009). When Zhang Qian returned to China, he told the emperor about these rich countries. The emperor soon sent trade groups who mostly sold silk and took **foreign** products back to China. These **merchants** first developed and **expanded** the Silk Road. In addition, many roads in Central Asia which were already being used between countries like Afghanistan, India, Iran, Syria, Turkey, Greece and Egypt later became part of the extensive Silk Road network.

Match the words and their meanings (see Body Paragraph 1 above):

a	barrier		ruler / king	Write the names of every country mentioned in BP1
b	diplomat		made something larger	1
c	emperor		from another country	2
d	tribe	f	making things, e.g. shoes, clothes, furniture	3
e	agriculture		someone who represents a government	4
f	crafts		businessman, trader	5
g	foreign		very	6
h	merchant		large group of families	7
i	extremely		obstacle which is difficult to pass	8
j	expanded		farming	9

Write the answers to these questions in your own words (i.e. do not copy any text):

1. Why was China historically isolated from the western regions of Asia?
.....
2. When, and why, did the diplomat Zhang Qian travel to the western regions of Asia?
.....
3. Explain why his journey was long and arduous (difficult).
.....4
4. Did the Chinese people know how prosperous (rich) Central Asia was? Explain.
.....
5. Did the Chinese emperor send an army to invade and conquer Central Asia? Explain.
.....
6. Explain why this route became known as the “Silk Road.”
.....
7. Did the Silk Road consist of only one long straight road?
.....
8. Did the Chinese emperor want war or peace with foreign countries? Explain.
.....



Body paragraph 2:

Because of the supportive attitude of the Chinese rulers, international trade developed smoothly and the Silk Road soon became a melting pot of cultures and languages. Chinese traders brought new and exotic products to many countries, including tea, rice, silk, furs, jewellery, paper, porcelain, glass, pens and ink, which introduced people to new lifestyles. Moreover, markets along the route offered places to sleep, eat, and even had street performers like singers and dancers who entertained travellers (Lang, n.d.). Thus the Silk Road helped to spread information, learning, religions, arts, and technology, and promoted co-operation between many different nations in ancient times. It was historically significant as the beginning of a globalised, modern and open world.

Write the correct form of the word in brackets: e.g. (nation) = **national** day

The Chinese ruler (supportive) the new trade programs.	
People saw many new (culture) attitudes and styles.	
The (introduce) of new materials developed new fashion styles.	
China (product) large amounts of tea and rice in 200 BC.	
Travellers observed different (religion) beliefs in other countries.	
This was the first time in (historical) that buyers had such a large choice.	
There were many (different) between their lifestyles.	
Because of (global), consumers have a vast choice of products today.	
The (developed) of the Silk Road started a multi-cultural world.	
China had many new (technology) products.	
The Silk Road was one of the world's most (significance) trade routes.	

Body paragraph 3:

Many parts of the Silk Road had always been difficult and dangerous. **For example**, travellers were hampered by snow and ice on the high mountains, lack of water in the deserts, and frequent attacks by robbers. **When** a sea route from China to the Middle East was opened up in the 15th century, trade on the Silk Road started to decline, **because** sea transport was much faster, cheaper and safer than travelling on the land routes. **In addition**, the Persians and the Turks had learned the secrets of sericulture (making silk), **so that** the import of silk from China was greatly reduced (Brown, 2011). **Although** some roads between Tajikistan, Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and India remained in use for many centuries, the busy, colourful streets and markets of the Silk Road slowly became submerged in the deserts; **as a result**, only the ruins of cities can be seen along the ancient routes today.

Write each of these linking words above its synonym (same meaning) in the text:

As soon as - therefore - Even though - For instance - as - thus - Furthermore

Conclusion:

In this essay I described some aspects of the Silk Road. To sum up, this famous route was first developed around 2000 years ago by the Chinese and was later merged with smaller Central Asian routes. The Silk Road was historically important because it was the beginning of global trade and a multi-cultural world. It declined after the development of a sea route, which was easier and cheaper for traders to use, and today there is not much left of this great ancient highway. In my opinion, the Silk Road is a fascinating subject which should be studied more in schools. It also played a significant role in the development of our region, so I hope archaeologists will continue to research the many ancient ruined cities along this route.

1. What was described in this essay?.....
2. Which three points were summed up?.....
3. What is the writer's opinion?.....
4. What research is suggested, and why?