

Lesson 1: Columbus Selling His Idea

Unit 3
Grade 4

Warm Up

A friend comes up to you and invites you to go on a nice long trip. You get excited and say yes. Your friend then says, “GREAT, let’s try going west to get east.”

Explain how you would respond to your friend.

We are going to learn about a man named Marco Polo.

Have you ever played the game Marco Polo?

Do you know who Marco Polo is?

Resource 1: Marco Polo - Game and Fame

Which Way Did He Go?

In the year 1271, seventeen-year-old Marco Polo traveled east to get to the Far East where China and the "Spice Islands" are located. Marco traveled with his father and uncle over five thousand miles from his home in Italy to China. Find Italy on a map. Then find China. They traveled east to get east. And they did it mostly across land. The Polos reached China in the year 1274.

Remember what you just read. Marco Polo traveled east and mostly by land to get to China which is in the Far East. And it took him three years to get there! That is a long time.

What Did the Polos Bring Back?

The Polos spent a lot of time in China but also traveled to other parts of Asia. They returned to Italy 24 years later with many riches and treasures. They were gone so long that people in Italy thought they had died.

Around 1300, Marco Polo wrote a book called "*The Travels of Marco Polo*." Many people read his book. It described many exciting things about China including goods that the people of Europe did not have. China had porcelain, coal, gunpowder, paper money, valuable spices, and exotic animals such as alligators and rhinoceroses. The Polos also brought back valuable gems such as rubies, sapphires, and diamonds.

Europeans wanted many of the goods that Marco Polo found in China.

What Effects Did Polo's Adventures Have on Europeans?

Marco's book had two major effects on the people of Europe. First, many wanted to get more of the goods that were found in China. Spices could help the bad tasting food in Europe taste better. Rubies and diamonds were beautiful and could be sold by European merchants for big profits. And coal could be used to heat people's homes.

The second effect of Marco Polo's trip was that people in Europe wanted to travel to Europe to learn more about the exciting world of China that Marco Polo described in his book. If they could get to China, they could bring back the goods, sell them, and get rich.

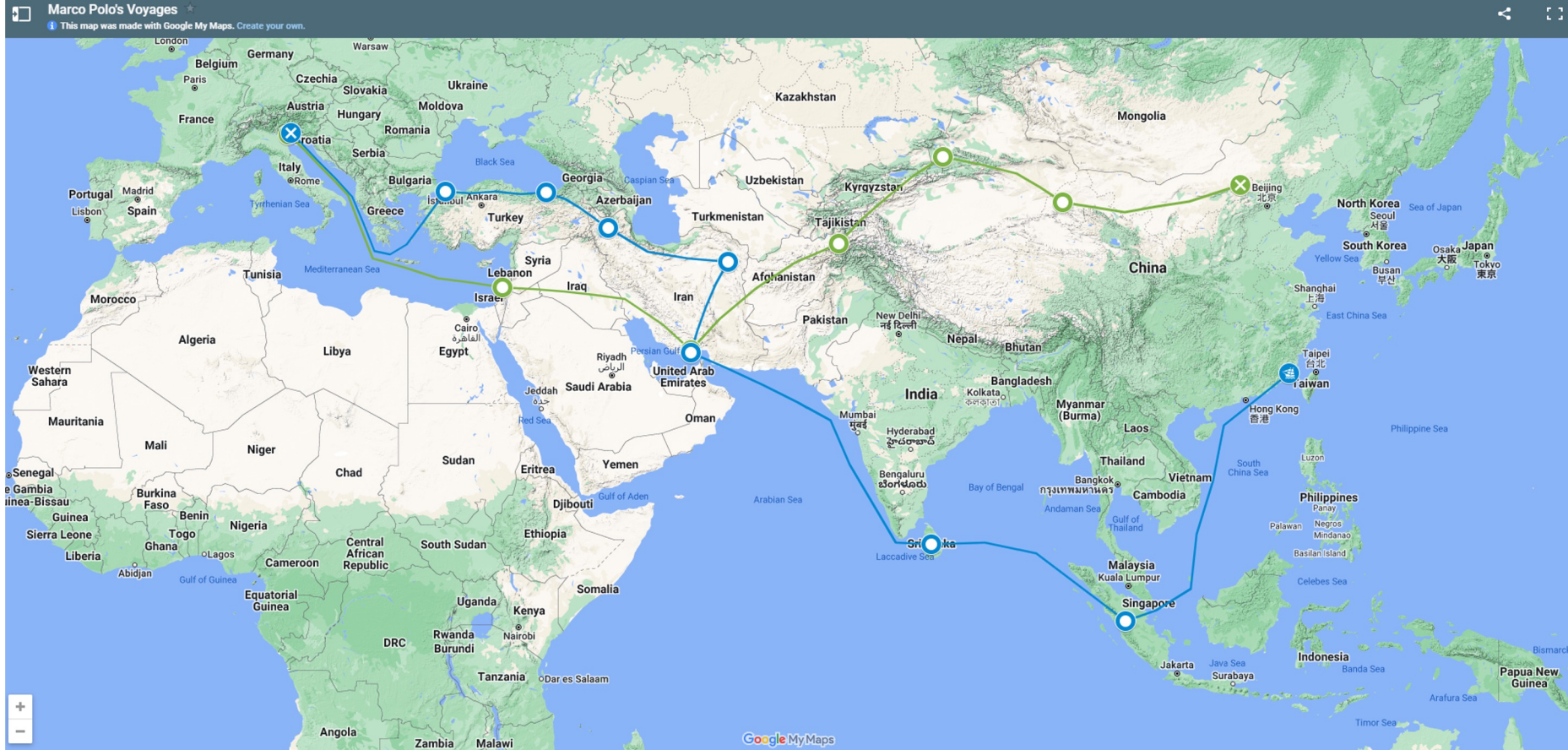
What Effect Did the Travels of Marco Polo Have on Christopher Columbus?

But there was a problem. It took a very long time to get to China by way of the route that Marco Polo took. Europeans wanted to find a quicker way to get there. If it took three years to get to China, the cost of the trip might be more than the profits from the goods. So, they started exploring. Really curious people like Christopher Columbus who read about the adventures of Marco Polo started thinking. Could he find a quicker route to China? In the year 1484, Columbus came up with a very unusual idea!

What was Columbus's idea? To travel west to get to the east. That's right. Go west to get east!

Does this make sense to you?

P.S. There is absolutely no connection between Marco Polo's fame and the game? Only his name.



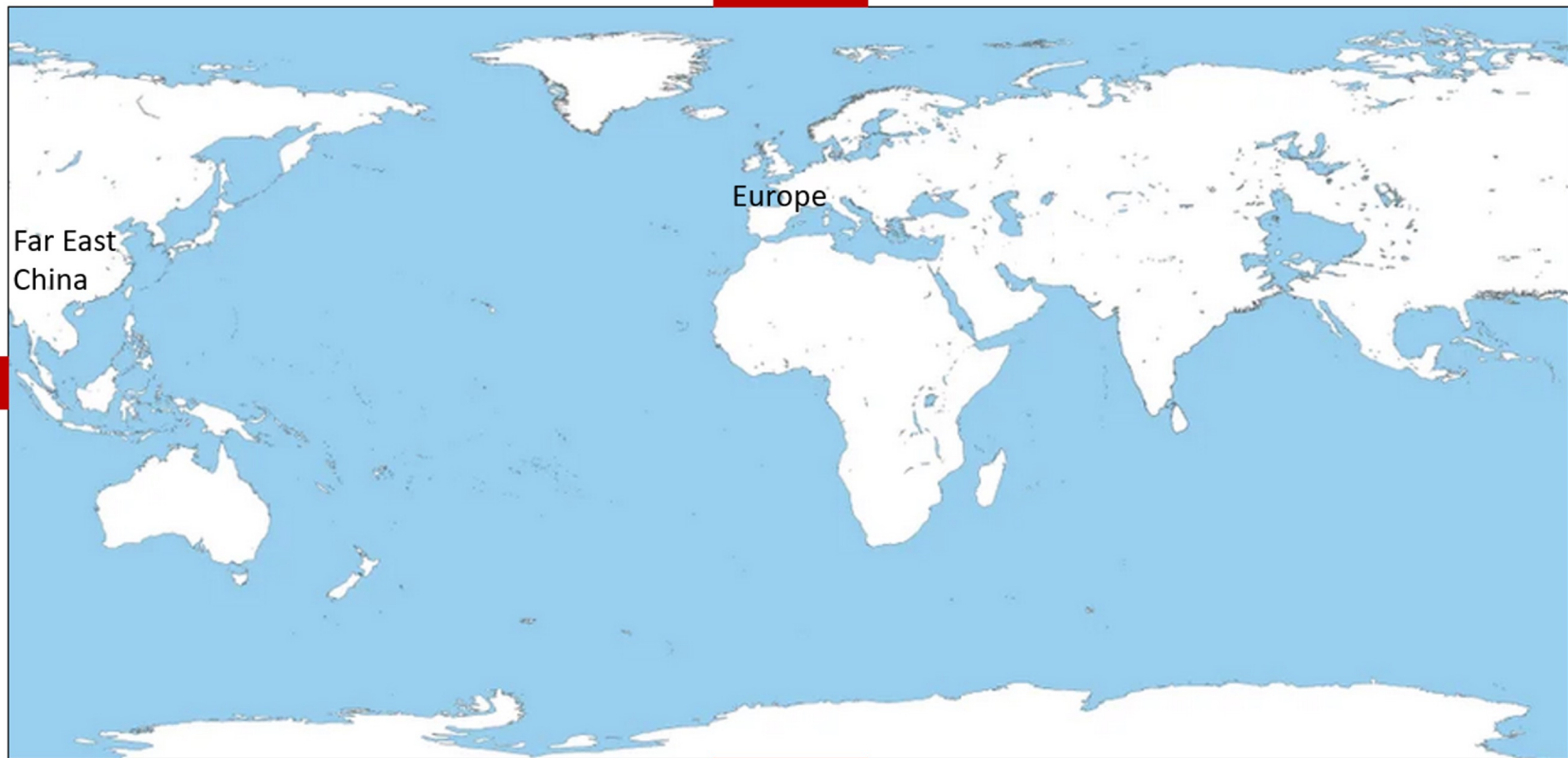
Who can find Italy and China on the map?
Where is Marco Polo's route?

The green line shows the route from Venice to Beijing.
The blue lines show the route of their return trip.





North



Far East
China

Europe

West

East

South

North



Far East
China

Columbus

Europe

Marco Polo's Route

West

East

“The Enterprise of the Indies”

Christopher Columbus went around to kings and queens in Europe asking them to pay for his plan that he called the *Enterprise of the Indies*. That plan was to sail to the Far East by sailing west.

South

Resource 4: Create a Timeline Using the Dates and Events Listed Below.

- 1485 - Portugal said no to Columbus.
- 1483 - Columbus proposed his *Enterprise of the Indies*
- 1487 - Spain set up commission to study the idea
- 1492 - Queen Isabella agreed to Columbus' idea
- 1290 - The *Travels of Marco Polo* book was published
- 1486 - Spain said no to Columbus

Timeline
Columbus' Enterprise of the Indies

The timeline consists of a vertical line on the right side. Six horizontal rectangular boxes are stacked vertically on the left side, each connected to the vertical line by a thin horizontal line. To the right of the vertical line, there are six grey rectangular markers, each connected to the vertical line by a thin horizontal line. The markers are positioned to the right of the boxes, suggesting they represent points in time.

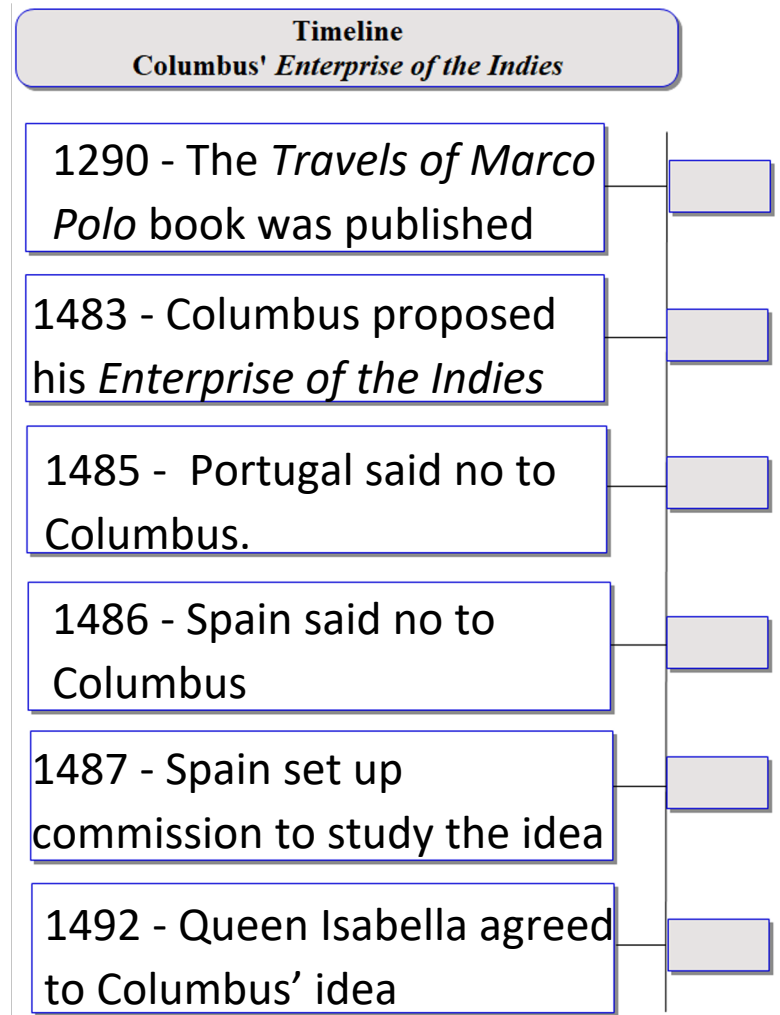
Check you timeline

Let's reflect:

1. How much time passed between when Columbus came up with his Enterprise of the Indies idea and when Spain finally agreed to sponsor his Enterprise of the Indies?
2. Why do you think it might have taken that long?

The next part of the lesson will focus on that last question: Why do you think it might have taken so long for Columbus to convince Spain to fund his Enterprise of the Indies?

You will now give them two clues and see if they can figure out the reason.



When you look at the clues, focus on these two things:

1. Why did it take so long for Columbus to find a sponsor for his Enterprise of the Indies?
2. Why was he finally sponsored?

Resource 5: Using Clues to Solve a Mystery

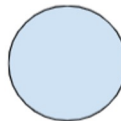
Why did it take so long for Columbus to convince someone in Europe to fund (pay for) his Enterprise of the Indies?

Clue 1

Shape 1

Shape 2

Shape 3



Clue 2

A stranger from a different country comes to you and asks you to give him the money so that he can walk from Delaware to California (3,000 miles) with only a backpack full of supplies and no opportunity to get more supplies. But he will collect things along the way that he thinks are valuable and give them to you when he returns.

Would you give him the money? Explain why.

Essential Questions

1. Why was Columbus' Enterprise of the Indies considered so radical?
2. Why did it take so long for Columbus to find a country to pay for his Enterprise of the Indies?