Main Idea and Summary

Grade 5 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

Name _____ Date _____

Circle the answer.

READ THIS FIRST

The Silk Road Was Many Roads

The name "Silk Road" makes it sound like a single highway stretching from China to the Mediterranean Sea. In fact, it was nothing of the kind. The Silk Road was a huge web of routes over land and sea. It linked China, Central Asia, India, Persia, Arabia, Africa, and Europe for more than 1,500 years. A German geographer invented the name in the 1800s, long after the busiest trading days had ended.

Very few traders traveled the whole distance. Instead, goods moved in short steps, like a relay race. A merchant from China might carry silk west to a market town in Central Asia. There, he traded it to a Sogdian merchant, who carried it farther to Persia. Another trader took it on toward the Mediterranean. Caravans of camels crossed deserts and mountain passes, resting at walled inns called caravanserais. Each town along the way grew wealthy from the trade passing through.

Silk was only one item on the move. Traders also carried spices, glass, horses, paper, cotton, and precious stones. Chinese rulers especially wanted the strong, fast horses raised in Central Asia. Fruits such as grapes and peaches spread to new lands. Some goods became valuable simply because they had traveled so far. A bolt of silk that was ordinary in China could be worth a fortune by the time it reached Rome.

Even more important than goods were the ideas that traveled with them. Papermaking spread from China to the Islamic world and later to Europe, changing how people kept records and shared books. Buddhism traveled from India into China along the trade routes. Mathematicians and astronomers shared knowledge in cities such as Samarkand and Baghdad. The numbers most of the world uses today, 0 through 9, first developed in India and moved west through this network. Musicians traded instruments and songs. Cooks borrowed spices and new ways of preparing food.

Travel was slow and hard. A caravan might spend months crossing the Taklamakan Desert, where water was scarce and sandstorms could hide the trail. Sea routes were faster, but storms could sink ships. These hardships help explain why goods passed from hand to hand rather than going all the way with one trader.

By the late 1400s and 1500s, sailing ships began carrying more goods directly between Europe and Asia, and the old overland routes grew quieter. Some historians now say "Silk Roads," not "Silk Road," to remind readers that there were many paths. Yet the Silk Road left lasting marks. Many of the foods we eat, the numbers we write, and the paper we write on reached us partly through this long chain of travelers. The network shows that trade has always carried more than goods. It carries ideas that can change the world.

1. Which statement best combines the text's main ideas?
   - Caravans crossed deserts, rested at caravanserais, and sometimes faced sandstorms.
   - Sailing ships replaced the Silk Road because travel over land was slow and hard.
   - The Silk Road was a network that passed goods and, more importantly, ideas between lands.
   - The Silk Road was a single highway that carried silk from China all the way to Rome.

2. How does the fifth paragraph support an idea from the second paragraph?
   - Its desert facts show that silk was cheap in China.
   - Its storms show why caravans avoided the walled inns along the way.
   - Its sea routes explain why the name was invented later.
   - Its hardships explain why goods moved in short relay steps.

3. Which detail best supports the author's claim that ideas mattered more than goods?
   Each town along the way grew wealthy from the trade.
   Papermaking spread to Europe and changed how people kept records.
   Silk could be worth a fortune by the time it reached Rome.
   Traders carried spices, glass, horses, and precious stones.

4. Why does the author begin by explaining the name "Silk Road"?
   to show that Germans controlled much of the trade
   to prove that silk was the most valuable good
   to explain why the routes ended in the 1800s
   to correct the idea that it was one single road

5. What does comparing the trade to a relay race suggest?
   Traders competed to reach Rome before anyone else.
   Only the fastest caravans of camels were allowed to trade in the markets.
   Merchants ran quickly between towns to save time.
   Each trader carried goods part of the way, then passed them on.

6. Why could ordinary Chinese silk be worth a fortune in Rome?
   It was the only good carried on the routes.
   Roman weavers made it finer than Chinese weavers.
   It had traveled so far that it was rare there.
   Each caravanserai added more silk to the load.

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Answer Key - Grade 5 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

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