



The Silk Road and the Han Dynasty

The Silk Road and the Han Dynasty

- Many advances in manufacturing took place during the Han Dynasty.



- As a result, productivity increased and the empire prospered immensely.

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- These advancements helped to pave the way for China to make contact with other people and cultures throughout Asia and ultimately the entire western world.

- By the Han period, the Chinese had become master iron-workers.



- They manufactured iron swords and armor that made the army more powerful and in turn made the Han Dynasty a military marvel of power.

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- Farmers also gained from the advancements in iron.



- The iron plow and the wheelbarrow, a single-wheeled cart, increased farming output

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- These new technologies allowed for an increase in productivity, which in turn meant more money for the generally poor farmers.

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- What is Silk and where does it come from???



● Silk Worms...

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- Essentially these worms will spin a massive cocoon and while inside develop into adult moths.



- These cocoons are then left behind once the moths leave and then are unraveled into a rudimentary form of silk strips.

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- These strips are then spun, dyed and weaved into silk products.



- Cultivators can unwind about 3,000 feet of silk from one cocoon, while 111 cocoons are needed for a man's tie, and 630 cocoons are needed for a woman's blouse.

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- China's cultivation of Silk under the Han Dynasty was the first time in history that we see a massive need for a product.



- In fact silk was the entire reason trade routes were established in Asia and remained a major path into their cultures for thousands of years.

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- Silk was the most important item to come out of the Han Dynasty.



- For centuries, Chinese women had known the complicated methods needed to raise silk worms, unwind their cocoons and then prepare the threads for dyeing and weaving.

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- The Chinese were determined to keep their procedure methods for making silk a secret at all cost.



- Revealing these secrets was actually punishable by death.

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- During the Han Period, weavers used foot powered looms to weave silk threads into beautiful fabric.



- Garments made from silk were very expensive and prestigious.

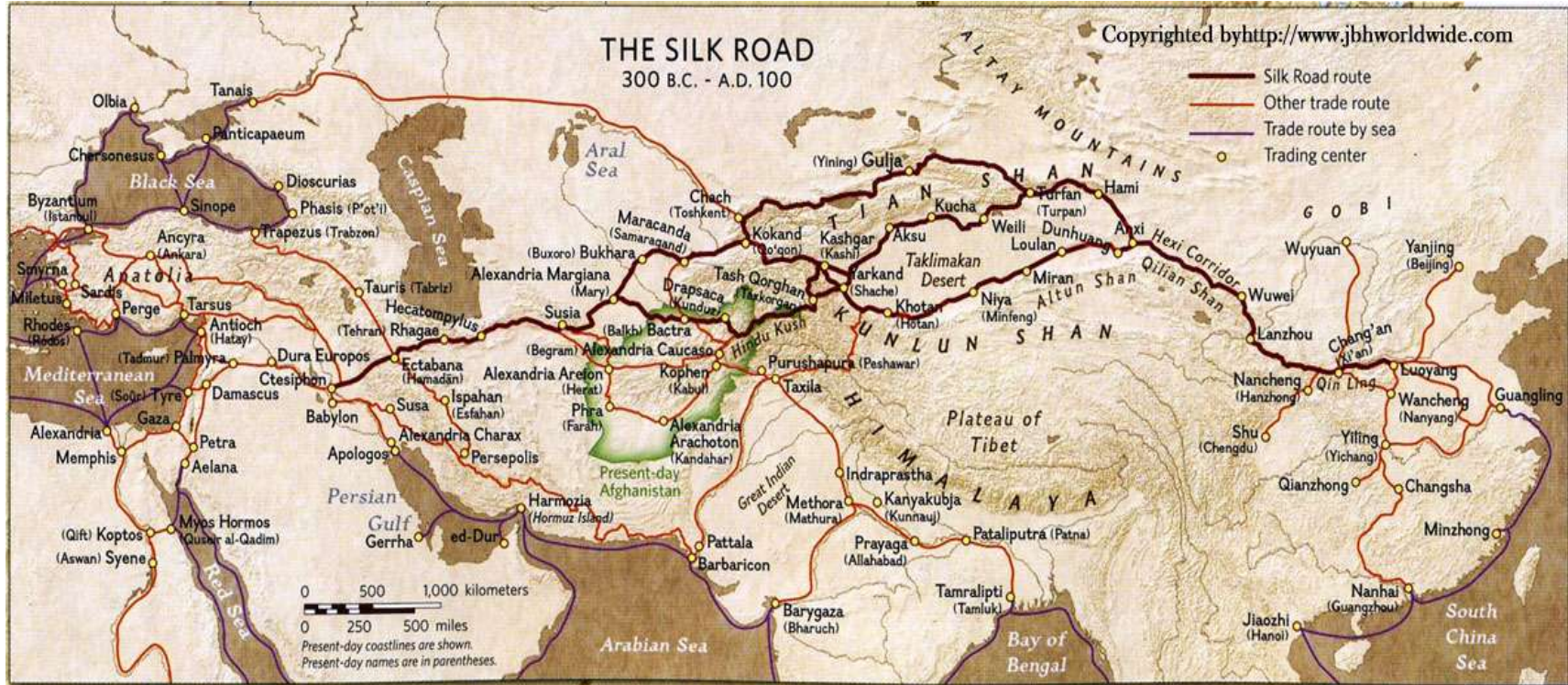
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- Purchasing silkworm cocoons in 1895, China

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- As the Han Dynasty expanded, merchants and travelers created an extensive network of trade routes that linked much of Asia, Europe and parts of North Africa together.



- These later became known collectively as the **Silk Roads**, since Silk from China was the principle commodity being exchanged over the roads.

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- The overland silk roads took caravans trade from China to the Roman Empire, thus linking two extreme Empires and continents.



- Chinese Silk was one of the most sought after items during the Roman Empire and was routinely fought over in markets.

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- Traders used a series of overland routes to take Chinese goods into distant lands purely for trading purposes.



- These goods were highly valued in other countries and massive amounts of profit could be made by merchants willing to travel. (**Silk Road Ruins / Currently in use Roads Today**)

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- Chinese traders did not travel the entire Silk Road however.



- Upon reaching central Asia, they sold their goods to local traders who would take them the rest of the way along trade routes. (Silk Road Ruins)

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- You can still see the remnants, the scars of the Silk road today...in places that look like forgotten folklore.

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- The Silk Road had a bunch of extensions...one of which was the **Tea Horse Road**



- Basically it was a network of caravan paths winding through the mountains of China.

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- The **Tea Horse Road** became part of the **Southern Silk Road**.

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- Traveling the Silk Road was extremely treacherous.



- Hundreds of men and camels loaded down with valuable goods, including silks and jade formed large Caravans.

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- Caravans would travel together for protection purposes, hiring armed guards to protect traders from bandits and crooks who would sack and steal their precious cargo



- Unfortunately thievery ran wild along the Silk Road and armed escorts were an absolute necessity.

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- Weather also presented other extreme dangers.



- Traders faced icy blizzards, desert heat and blinding sandstorms.

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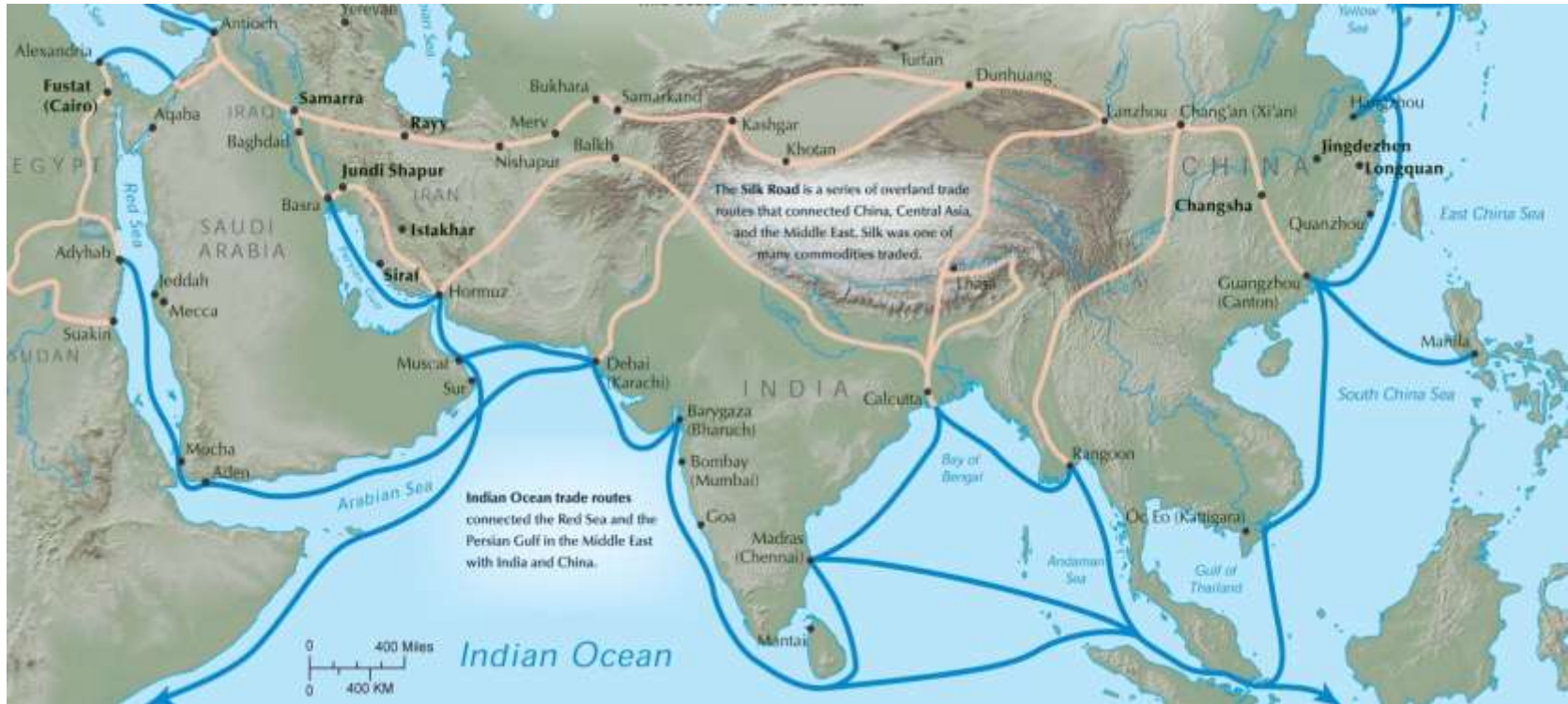


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- The Silk Roads also included a vast network of sea-lanes that sustained maritime commerce throughout much of the eastern hemisphere.



- The sea lanes of the silk road became extremely important for communities in India that were able to take advantage of the massive trade expansion that was taking place.

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- A wide variety of manufactured and agriculture products traveled over the trade routes, not just highly valued silk.



- You have fine spices, cloves, and nutmeg all coming from China as well as ginger, cinnamon, and tea traveling out of India

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- This entire trading experiment was crafted by Emperor Wudi of the Han Dynasty.



- He saw a way to make China prosperous and essentially started a trading revolution.

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- It was because of the silk trading routes that we have such an extensive merchant exchange today.

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o The Modern Silk Road

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- How many people drive foreign cars?

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- Clothing labels....

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- The silk roads also served as magnificent highways for merchants and their commodities, but others also took advantage of the opportunities offered to travel in a relative safe environment.



- Merchants, missionaries and other travelers carried their beliefs, values and religious convictions to these new lands.



- Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and Christianity all traveled the silk roads and attracted converts far from their original homelands.

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- In an recent effort to continue being Communist, China has been trying to stomp out Religious freedoms in an effort to push people back to the native religions of Daoism and Confucianism... **THOUSANDS HAVE BEEN TORN DOWN**...there are about 60 million Catholics in China

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- It was through the Silk Road that the Religion of Buddhism was able to spread from India into China and eventually make its way into Japanese and Korean culture.



- Through the Silk Road you can see the way “Buddha” was depicted...look at the differences in the facial features. (Indian Buddha)



○ Chinese Buddha

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● Korean Buddha

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○ Japanese Buddha

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- Initially the Indian Buddhist had a very difficult time explaining the Buddha's teaching to the Chinese.



- However, through ideas found throughout Daoism the Indian monks were able to describe Buddhist beliefs and the religion eventually found a home among Chinese culture.

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- Invisible travelers such as disease pathogens also crossed the silk roads and began devastating epidemics when they found fresh populations to infect.



- The epidemic disease that was spread over the silk road caused dramatic demographic decline, especially in China.

- The Middle Ages in Europe reached a high point during the 1200's.



- In the 1300's however, disaster struck...A terrible **plague**, known as the **Black Death** or **Bubonic Plague**, swept across Europe and Asia.

- A **plague** is a disease that spreads extremely quickly and kills many people violently.



- Most scientist think that the Black Death was a disease caused by a type of bacteria carried by fleas.

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- The Black Death probably began somewhere in the Gobi Desert, a desert located in central Asia.



It had been around for centuries in Asia, but in the 1300's, the plague began to spread farther and more quicker than ever before.

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- These fleas infested black rats and unfortunately due to the unsanitary lifestyles of humans during the Middle Ages, these rats were literally everywhere.

- The way that the Black Death spread so rapidly all of a sudden was completely baffling to Historians and Scientist at first.
- **How could this illness move so quickly?**



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- Upon further research Historians believe that the Mongol Empire was truly responsible for the plague spreading so fast.



- The Mongols had created a vast empire that covered all of the land from Eastern Europe through Central Asia, ending in what is now China.

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- The Mongols had continued using an existing, widespread trade network set up between China, the Middle East and Europe.



- This trade network was so prosperous that they encouraged its use constantly, in order to bring wealth into their vast Empire.

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- By the early 1300's, more goods were being shipped across central Asia faster than ever before.



- This made it possible for the Black Death to spread so rapidly, as caravans infested with rats carried the plague from city to city.

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- The first documented outbreak took place in **China** in **1331 C.E.** and again in **1353 C.E.**



- The Black Death killed between **40** and **60** million people, cutting China's population nearly in half.

- **How does the Black Death Kill?**

Once contracted by a human the disease became airborne.

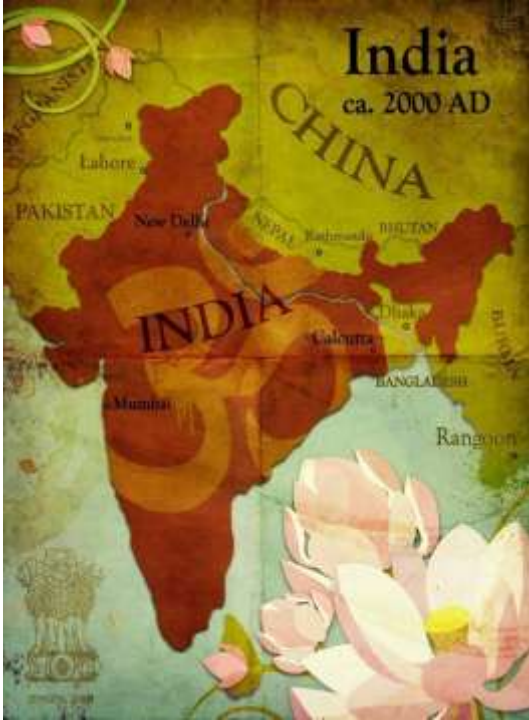
It would take about 3-7 days for it to kill you.

Symptoms were a fever, painful swelling of the lymph glands, red spots on skin that turned black and armpits would fill with blood.



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- The disease appeared in **India** as early as the 1320's and reached **Mecca**, deep inside the Muslim lands, in 1329.



- While the Black Death spread throughout Asia it was also traveling all over Europe.

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- The Black Death appeared in Europe in 1346 at the city of **Caffa** (Today known as Feodosiya), located along the Black Sea.

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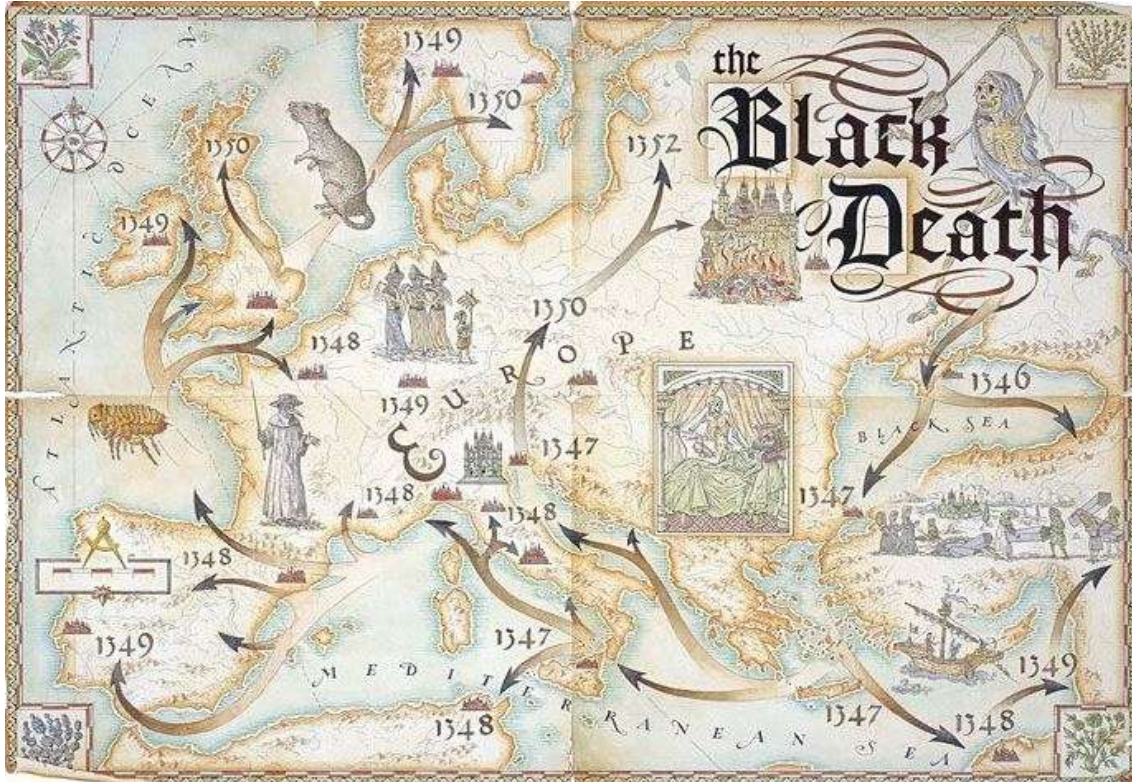
- **Caffa** was a trade colony controlled by Italian merchants from the city **Genoa**.



- Their ships carried the plague to Sicily in October of 1347...either from the Mongols or Cargo that was plague ridden.

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- From there it spread into Italy and by the end of 1349, it had spread through France, Germany and finally England.



- By 1351 it had reached Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and Russia.

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- As many as 19-38 million Europeans died from the Black Death between 1347 and 1351. (A cross was used to show that bodies were inside a house for pick up)



- That is nearly one out of every two people.

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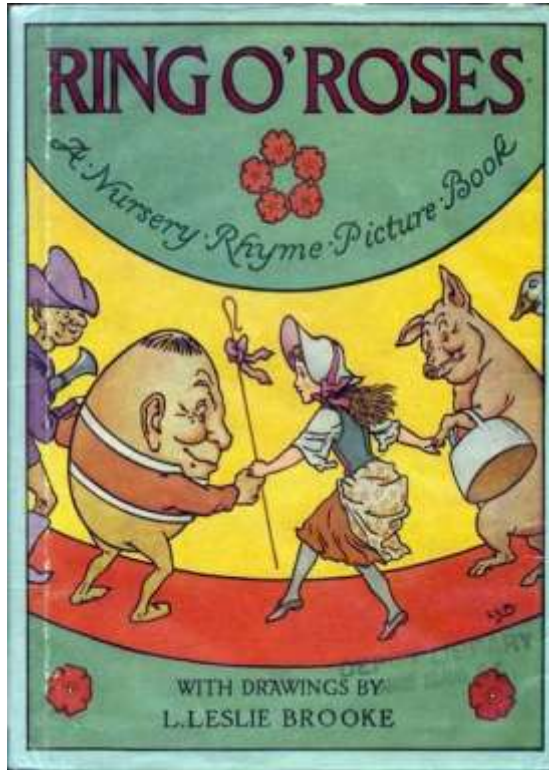
- People at this time still did not have a proper understanding of how diseases and bacteria spread, or even how they attack the human body.



- A **Plague Doctor** was a medical physician who treated victims of the plague...they wore a mask with a bird-like beak to protect them from being infected by the disease.



- History Mystery Time: **Ring Around the Rosie**



- Many folklorists believe that the popular nursery rhyme “**Ring Around the Rosie**” is about the Black Death.

- Ring-a-round the rosie,
A pocket full of posies,
Ashes! Ashes!
We all fall down.



- The first line refers to the round pink rash that was and still is an early sign of the disease.



- Posies, or bouquets of flowers, were worn to disguise the terrible smell of the infection.

- The third line refers to the burning of infected corpses.



- The final line is about almost everyone infected with the Black Death eventually died, or fell down.

- Mankind the Story of Us:
 - Plague: 13:00 – 17:50 = 4:50 Minutes
 - Plague: 21:40 – 36:10 = 14:30 Minutes

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- The magnificent Silk Roads that were created by the Han Dynasty are widely regarded as their most valuable contribution of the Chinese culture.



- But what happened to the Han Dynasty??

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- In the year 184 C.E. the Daoists sect Huang Jin (Yellow Scarves) rebelled against the Han court and caused significant damage to the stability of the Dynasty.



- Although in the end, Han the Imperial Army was able to put down the rebellion, the damage to the Empire was significant.

- The end of the Han Dynasty was followed by a long period of unrest and civil war.



- It began with the Three Kingdoms, which grew out of the three chief economic areas of the Han Dynasty.

- The leaders of the kingdoms attempted to reunite the empire and were therefore at constant warfare.
- These three kingdoms were the **We**i, in northern China, the **Shu** to the west, and the **Wu** in the east.
- The Three Kingdoms existed from 220-265 C.E.



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- The kingdom of Wei was ruled by Cao Cao, who was a warlord and often portrayed as a cruel and merciless tyrant...also a skilled military genius



- This was the strongest of the kingdoms, and he had power over the valley of Wei even during the time of the Han rule.

- Cao Cao attempted to unify all of China under his rule, but was defeated by a mob of allied kingdoms that banded together in the battle of the Red Cliff to defeat the Wei



- This defeat was the beginning of the division into three kingdoms.



- Engravings on a cliff-side mark one widely-accepted site of the battle...the engravings are at least a thousand years old.

- The Wei and Shu kingdoms were both legalist states, while the Wu kingdom was ruled by a confederation of the most powerful families of the area.



- The Wei kingdom eventually captured the Shu kingdom in 263 C.E. and caused even further civil wars throughout most of China.

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- Finally an aggressive family rose to power very quickly, and one of its members, Sima Yan founded the Jin Dynasty in 265 C.E which lasted for 155 years...their silk road continued to bring prosperity...