

## WHERE DO PEACHES COME FROM? An Explanation of Local Foodways & the History of the Silk Road

Grades 3-5 | 1 Class Period



### OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will compare how peaches grown in Massachusetts travel from farms to our cafeterias with how ancient civilizations obtained peaches from China, where they were first cultivated. How do foods move around the globe?

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How do local peaches get to us?
- How did peaches travel from China to Europe through Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa along the Silk Road?
- How do we communicate about different foods when we can't use language?

### MA STATE FRAMEWORKS

#### **Nutrition and Balanced Eating [3.1.NE]**

4. Describe how cultivation, trade routes, and regions affect food supply, and how food production affects nutrition-related decisions.

### MATERIALS

- Sticky notes with one of eight Silk Road Crops written on them: carrots, peaches, melons, apples, cucumbers, black pepper, pears, cranberries
- Basket (if you wish to mix the sticky notes around and randomize their order)
- Projector
- Whiteboard or Chalkboard

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### PROCEDURE

#### Part I: Local Peaches

##### Warm Up

- Explain that peaches can grow in Massachusetts. Project the MassGrown Map (<https://massnrc.org/farmlocator/>) to see where peaches are grown in Massachusetts.
  - Settings: Location Type: Any Type; Crops/Activities: Peaches. Make sure the search is "statewide."
- Explain that Massachusetts peaches are typically available mid-July through mid-September. When they are not in season, we can eat preserved local peach products or ship fresh peaches to Massachusetts from other places.

##### Activity

- Ask students to identify all of the people involved in getting peaches from the farm to their cafeteria tray. Write the responses as a flow chart on the board. Prompt students to think carefully and not to miss any steps along the way.
- A sample outcome might be:
  - The Food Service director calls the farm and tells the farmer how many peaches they need.
  - The farmer tells his workers how many peaches to pick.
  - The peach pickers pack the peaches in a box and hand it to a delivery driver.
  - The delivery driver brings the peaches to the cafeteria.
  - The cafeteria staff unpacks the peaches and puts the peach on your tray.
- Ask students to think about the different methods of communication these people use to get the peaches to us. Have students make a list then share them in pairs then with the whole class.

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### PROCEDURE

#### Part II: Ancient Peaches

##### Warm Up

- Show this TED-Ed video that gives an overview of the Silk Road: <http://bit.ly/4kRgJTty> (~5 minutes)
- Explain that different foods, like peaches, were traded along the Silk Road. Before peaches were grown in the United States, they had to travel all the way from China. China's climate has a period of cold that allows peach blossoms to form. Explain that peaches were unable to grow in other parts of Southeast Asia and the Middle East because the weather there was too warm.
- Explain that traders on the Silk Road came from different countries and spoke different languages. Tell students that they will do an activity to simulate how peaches got from China to Europe and how the traders may have communicated with each other.

##### Activity

- Have students form a circle facing inward with their backs facing out. Place one sticky note (with crops written on them) on each student's back.
- Instruct students not to say what is written on the notes.
- Explain that students will need to silently communicate with each other to form groups of like products. The students will not be able to see what is written on their own back, but will need to figure it out based on gestures from their classmates. Encourage them to act out what their product looks like or how it is eaten.
- After the groups are formed, project the map of Europe and Asia showing where each crop is native. Give students a moment to review where their crop's origin is located.
- Ask students to order their groups to simulate the trade route along the map, using the numbers on the map as a guide. When they are finished, give the peach group an object representing a peach, and they will pass it along the line of the groups until it ends in the cranberry group, in Europe.

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## EXTENSIONS & VARIATIONS

The book, [Fruit from the Sands: The Silk Road Origins of the Food We Eat](#) by Robert N. Spengler III, contains a wealth of information about the archaeological evidence of crop origins. Students should read the section about peaches (pp 203-212) to learn more about their ancient origins and uses.

Students may be interested in seeing a peach seed. Prepare a peach pit (or multiple peach pits) by drying them on the counter for several days. Use pliers or nutcrackers to extract the peach seeds, either before class or as an activity with students. Once extracted, allow students to record their observations about the seeds and what plant family they think peaches belong to.

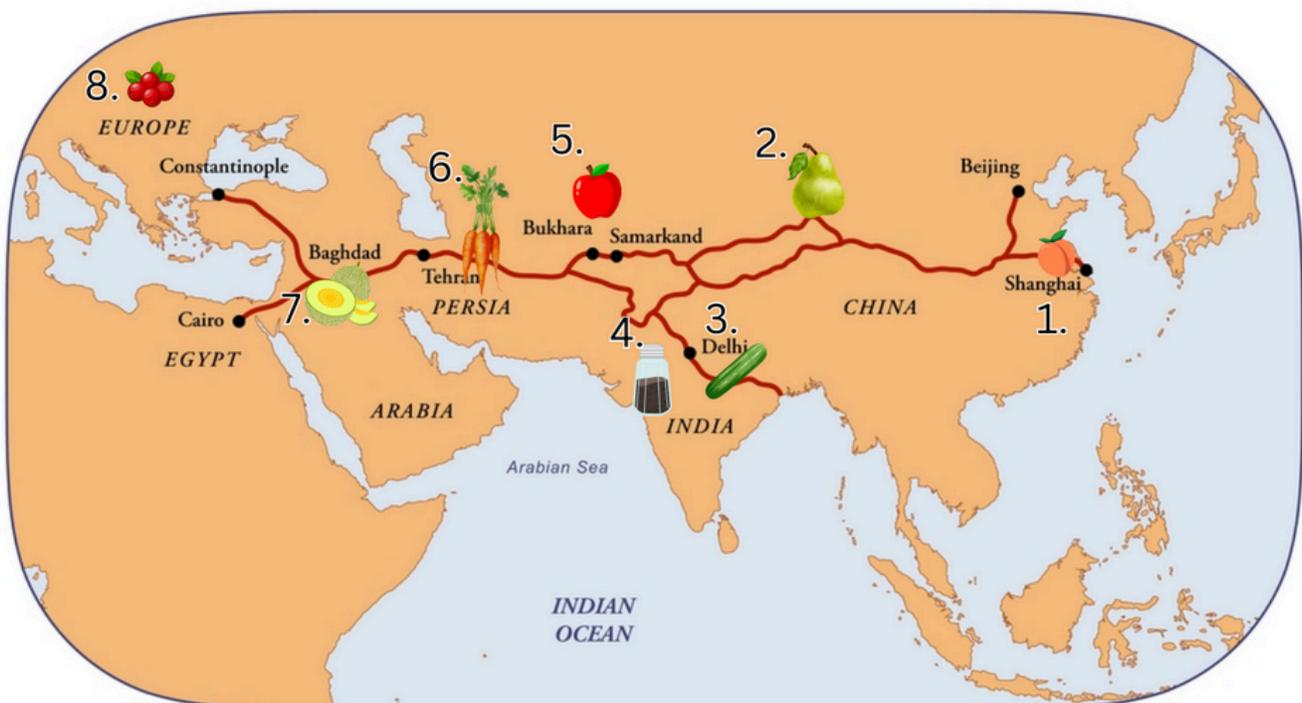
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HANDOUT



## The Silk Road



Source: IFLScience