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The Explorations of Zheng He

Lesson: To learn about the 7 voyages of *Zheng He* made so many years before Columbus

Class: This library lesson is geared for 4th grade students, to be held during their weekly library time. It will be presented either with or after their unit on explorers, depending on the classroom teachers' wishes.

Objective: To learn that China had a great explorer well before Columbus. To compare and contrast Zheng He's first voyage with the third voyage of Columbus in the area of size of ships, crews, and places traveled.

Time: Library classes are held weekly for 40 minutes. Twenty-five minutes of this time is used for lessons, with the last 15 minutes used for book check outs. This lesson will take 3-4 twenty-five minute sessions.

Assessment:

No grades are given for the library pull-out, though many activities can count as daily grades. Consult with the teacher to see if she wants the game in Lesson 4 to be used as a daily grade.

Materials Needed:

Class set of atlases, enough for 2 per table

Or laminated world map

Globes, 1 per table

Adventures of the Treasure Fleet: China Discovers the World by Ann Martin Bowler

Or *The Great Voyages of Zheng He* by Song Nan Zhang

[My preference is to use the *Adventures of the Treasure...* book, but I do not own it yet, so the lesson will use *The Great Voyages* book]

Twine, 100 ft, and 21' 3"

Popcorn kernels

4 clear containers for the kernels, 2 labeled Columbus, 2 labeled Zheng He

Laptop and lightbox or a computer lab

Printouts from resources (listed in each lesson)

Post-it notes for game in lesson 4

Dry erase board

Lesson One:

Introduce the topic of Zheng He, point out the maps on each table, noting the area of his voyages.

Read *Great Voyages*.

Show the video clip of treasure ships from the website in resource #3.

For the check out time, have books pulled on explorers, ships, and China

Lesson Two: This lesson needs the laptop and boxlight or a computer lab. If in a computer lab, the computers need to be set to the Google Earth link in resource #8. This lesson needs 3 print outs.

Review pages 13-14 of *Great Voyages*.

Watch the Google Earth presentation of the places Zheng He visited. This presentation needs to be edited for just the first voyage. (The program can help you do that). Have a print-out of the places visited from the Wikipedia link #4, along with the map portion from #7. Let the students follow on their printed maps as Google Earth visits the locations.

Talk about the kinds of ships used in this voyage, also from #4. This can also be printed out from #4.

Using the print-out from #7 (2 per table, only of ship), compare the sizes of the ships between Columbus and Zheng He.

Check out time: have fiction books set in China, Chinese folk tales, fiction books about life on the seas

Lesson Three:

This lesson will compare the ships and crew sizes of the two explorers.

Review p. 2 and 10 of the book.

Compare the sizes of the ships of Zheng He and Columbus using the twine. Our school has 2 long hallways in an “L” shape and the library sits in the corner of the “L”. Going into the hall, let 2 students each hold the ends of the 2 twines, extending down one of the halls.

Return to the library. Now compare the number of ships using the popcorn kernels. You can either pre-count the kernels, or let each student count out about 15 kernels each. Use 2 clear containers to have the students put the kernels in. Label one container for Columbus and one for He. Put 17 kernels in the Columbus container, and 317 in He’s container.

Now, use a 1:100 ratio, count out (or pre-count) 15 and 280 kernels. Have 2 more clear containers labeled for each explorer, and have the students drop the kernels in each one.

Check-out time: have books on Columbus and pirates (since Zheng He defeated pirates)

Lesson Four:

This is a wrap-up time. Using the table as an example, draw it on a dry erase board (we have portable ones).

Have the answers to the table listed on post-it notes. Divide the class into 2 teams, lining them up in 2 lines in front of the board. Give the first students in each line a post-it note, and let them race to put it in the right part of the table. The next student can either correct a mistake made, or receive a new post-it note. The first team to complete their pile of notes wins.

Talk with the classroom teacher to see if she/he wants to have this activity count as a daily grade, otherwise this is just for fun.

Explorer	Length of Ship	Number of Ships	Number of crew	Places visited
Zheng He				
Columbus				

Resources for Lesson Plan

#1 <http://www.nytimes.com/library/magazine/millennium/m3/kristof.html>

1492: The Prequel

Decades before Columbus, Zheng He sailed from China with 300 ships and 28,000 men. His fleet got as far as Africa and could have easily reached America, but the Chinese turned back. What happened? **By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF Photographs by GUEORGUI PINKHASSOV**

#2 <http://www.time.com/time/asia/features/journey2001/intro.html>

The Asian Voyage: In the Wake of the Admiral

Six centuries after Admiral Zheng He set sail, Adi Ignatius finds a China still struggling with its place in the world

Has link in a sidebar for an interactive description of his ship in a pop-up window

#3 http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sultan/media/expl_01q.html

As this striking animation shows, China's 15th-century "treasure junks" would have dwarfed European vessels of the time.

#4 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zheng_He

Has his 7 voyages listed in a chart with the countries visited
Has a section on the different kinds of ships used in his fleet

#5 <http://www.mariner.org/exploration/index.php?type=explorer&id=6>

This link is for the home part of Zheng He's info at The Mariner's Museum

#6 <http://www.mariner.org/exploration/index.php?page=voyages&explorer=6>

This link is to a map of all the places visited on his 7 voyages from the same "The Mariner's Museum"

#7 <http://www.chinapage.com/zhenghe.html>

Short overview of Zheng He with a map, and illustration of his ship compared to Columbus

#8 <http://bbs.keyhole.com/ubb/showthreaded.php/Cat/0/Number/37092/page/0>

Google Earth visual tour of Zheng He's voyages. Places can be unchecked to customize the tour.

#9 <http://www.international.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=10387>

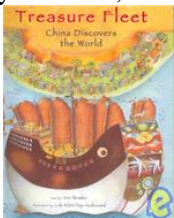
Zheng He's Voyages of Discovery

Noted oceanic scientist Jin Wu discusses the 15th century expeditions of the Chinese mariner Zheng He & the celebration of the 600th anniversary of his first voyage
By Richard Gunde

By the UCLA International Institute

#10 *Adventures of the treasure fleet : China discovers the world*

by Bowler, Ann Martin. (2006)



This fictionalized account tells of Chinese admiral and explorer Zheng He's expeditions between 1405 and 1433. Bowler's "summary of historically agreed facts" at the bottom of each double-page spread offers additional information but makes the reading disjointed.

The text is accompanied by handsomely detailed, golden-hued colored-pencil illustrations. No specific sources are listed. A large map poster is included.

#11 *The Great Voyages of Zheng He* by Song Nan Zhang (2005)

(from inside book jacket)

The authors resurrect the character with their faithful portrayal of *Zheng He* as a loyal and devoted public servant together with having an innate ability to lead and influence. The text overflows with emotions that are complemented by oversized illustrations lavishly depicting the magnitude of this historical enterprise. One can easily become as engrossed in the paintings as one does in the fast-moving events of the story.