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The Voyages of Zheng He

Class/Level: This lesson is designed for sixth grade students of mixed ability levels in a self-contained classroom.

Objectives: The students will learn about the voyages of Zheng He using their text book (see attachments) and various internet sites (see references). They will incorporate what they learn into a math lesson using graphs and a social studies skills lesson by making a time line of the voyages.

Time: This lesson will take two 40-45 minute class periods.

Materials: Handouts
Paper/pencil/colored pencils
Desktop world map
Computer
McDougal Littell's *World History*

Assessment: Students will be informally assessed during their classroom participation in the discussion of the text. A formal assessment will be the finished time line and graph.

Procedure: Students will read independently the short entry in their textbooks about Zheng He and participate in a discussion about this assignment. Desktop maps will be used to locate China and the general area of the journeys.

To reinforce the reading/discussion, students will be divided into three groups. One group will go to the computer lab and use <classzone.com> to go through an interactive web page on Zheng He which will give them additional information about the voyages.

A second group will use <[.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sultan/explorers2.html#n01](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sultan/explorers2.html#n01)> to get information to create and illustrate a time line of the voyages.

The third group will use various web sites (see references) to gather information about the size of Zheng He's ships and that of Columbus' Santa Maria. I will give them one site, but I will expect them to explore others. They will then use this information to complete the bar graph activity. (see attachment)

Each student will complete all three activities and include them in their Asian Studies notebooks.

The lesson will culminate with the class watching the You Tube video on the voyage of Zheng He.

References:

McDougal Littell's *World History* ©2008 McDougal Littell; Published by Houghton Mifflin Company

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzFq0Ivwz9g>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sultan/explorers2.html#n01>

http://www.classzone.com/cz/books/ms_wh_survey/get_chapter_group.htm?cin=14&rag=animations&at=animated_history&npos=3&spos=14&var=animated_history

make inferences How do the voyages of Zheng He illustrate the power of the Ming Empire?

Trade and Overseas Voyages

 **KEY QUESTION** How did the Ming change China's foreign relations?

Yongle wanted to win tribute from other countries. **Tribute** is a payment made by one ruler or government to another in order to ensure protection. To achieve this goal, Yongle built a great fleet of ships.

The Voyages of Zheng He Yongle selected **Zheng He** (juhng huh) to be the admiral of the fleet. Zheng He was a Muslim who had grown up in southwestern China. Under Yongle's direction, he led seven voyages. These expeditions were completed between 1405 and 1433. Scholars estimate the voyages covered 100,000 miles and visited about 30 countries in Southeast Asia, India, Arabia, and Africa. (See the map on page 414.)

Zheng He's foreign fleets were impressive, often made up of as many as 300 ships and 28,000 men. In addition to sailors and navigators, there were also soldiers, doctors, cooks, scribes, and carpenters on board. The ships carried enough food for the entire voyage. Water was replenished every ten days. The ships were packed with gold and silver objects, silks, porcelain dishes, and perfumes.

As he traveled, Zheng He gave out these items in exchange for goods from the countries he visited. He brought back spices, gems, medicinal herbs, and exotic animals such as zebras, ostriches, and a giraffe. On one voyage, he returned with government representatives from 30 different countries. China's foreign trade and reputation grew because of his voyages. The voyages also provided information to the imperial court about foreign countries.

This is downloaded from <http://www.askasia.org/frame.cgi?page=/rolasrm/lessonlan/1000060.htm> Should the Ming End the Treasure Ship Voyages? by: Jean Johnson, New York University

Timeline: A Chronology Of the Ming Voyages

First Voyage 1405-1406

Zheng He commanded a fleet of 317 ships, almost 28,000 men, their arms and supplies. The fleet included several massive "treasure ships," approximately 400 feet long and 160 feet wide. The places the fleet stopped included Champa (central Vietnam); Majapahit on Java; and Semudra and Deli on the northern coast of Sumatra. It continued to Ceylon and then to Calicut, known as "the great country of the Western Ocean." Traveling through the Straits of Malacca on its return, the Chinese defeated a pirate chief who had been threatening trading ships in the Straits. Zheng He was not able to find any trace of the deposed Emperor whom some Chinese had thought might have found asylum in Southeast Asia.

Second Voyage 1407-1409:

Zheng-He did not go on the second voyage which probably returned the Siamese ambassador who had gone to China earlier on his own, and installed a new leader in Calicut. Again the fleet stopped at Champa (central Vietnam); Majapahit on Java; and Semudra and Deli on the northern coast of Sumatra; Ceylon; and Calicut.

Third Voyage 1409-1411

This expedition's special charge concerned Malacca, a port on the Malay peninsula that was gaining importance. Stopping in Malacca, the Chinese recognized Paramesawara as the legitimate ruler of Malacca and gave him a tablet officially declaring that the city was a vassal state of China. Increasing Malacca's power, the Chinese court believed, would establish a balance of power among Siam, Java and Malacca and insure Chinese trading rights through the Straits. After stopping at Semudra, the fleet went to Ceylon where they got involved in a local power struggle among its Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslim populations. Luring the Sinhalese troops out of the city, Zheng He and his troops took the capital, captured the ruler and installed a ruler of their own choice in his place. After this voyage many ambassadors from the countries the treasure fleet had visited brought tribute to the Ming court.

Fourth Voyage 1414-15:

This voyage headed for Hormuz and the Persian Gulf. The fleet stopped at Champa and Java. At Sumatra, the Chinese captured a pretender to one of the local thrones and sent him back to Nanjing where he was executed. One part of the fleet went to Bengal and brought a giraffe back to the Emperor. (The Chinese believed the giraffe was a magical animal comparable to the unicorn, an auspicious sign and symbol of the righteousness of the Ming reign.) Cheng He and the rest of the fleet continued up the coast of Malay; to Ceylon; the Maldives; ports on the Indian coast; and Hormuz. This voyaged marked the height of Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean.

1415: The Emperor decides to move the Chinese court from Nanjing to Beijing.

1416: Repairs on the Grand Canal are completed.

Fifth Voyage 1417-19

This impressive fleet was to take back home 19 ambassadors who had brought tribute to the Chinese court. While at Quanzhou, Zheng He tried to stop the persecution of Muslims there. The fleet then went to several ports on Champa and Java; to Palembang and other ports on Sumatra; to Malacca on the Malay peninsula; the Maldives, Ceylon; and Cochin and Calicut. This time the Chinese attempted to strengthen Cochin to counter the power of Calicut. The fleet explored the Arabian coast from Hormuz to Aden and the east coast of Africa, returning ambassadors from Mogadishu, Brawa, and Malinda and also stopped at Mombasa. The sailors brought the Emperor another giraffe from Africa.

Sixth Voyage 1421-22:

Besides taking ambassadors home, this voyage explored more of the coast of Africa. At Semudra the fleet divided and the majority of the ships went to Aden and the coast of Africa while Zheng He returned to China, perhaps so he could participate in the events surrounding the dedication of the Forbidden City in Beijing as the new capital.

1419-23: A costly rebellion erupts in Annam.

1421: Fire destroys much of the Forbidden City. Emperor Zhu Di first invites criticism, but soon he kills those who criticized him.

1422: Emperor Zhu Di plans a military expedition against the Mongols.

1424: Emperor Zhu dies while on military maneuvers in the north.

1424: Zhi Di's eldest son becomes Emperor. He favors his Confucian advisors and hopes to lessen tax burdens on the people caused by expensive military maneuvers, the voyages of the fleet and moving the capital.

1424: The Emperor issues an edict ending all voyages of the treasure ships.

1425: The Emperor dies.

1425-1435: Zhu Zhanji becomes Emperor.

1430: Emperor Zhu Zhanji issues an edict calling for a 7th voyage to inform distant lands of his rule and to urge them to "follow the way of heaven and to watch over the people so that all might enjoy the good fortune of lasting peace." (Levathes, pg. 160 -- see Resources, end of lesson)

Seventh Voyage 1431-1433

300 ships with approximately 27,500 men embark. Besides ports on Champa and Java, the fleet stops at Palembang, Malacca, Semudra, Ceylon and Calicut. The Chinese urge the Siamese king to stop harassing the kingdom of Malacca. At Calicut, one part of the fleet goes along the east African coast to Malinidi and

trade on the Red Sea and several of the Chinese sailors may have visited Mecca. Zheng He, who had probably stayed in Calicut, died on the return voyage and was buried at sea.

1435: The Emperor dies.

1436 - 1449: Zhu Qizhen, the emperor's seven year old son, becomes Emperor. Initially he is controlled by eunuch Wang Zhen

1449: Wang leads an expedition against the Mongols on the northwest frontier. During this campaign, the Mongols capture the Emperor Zhu Qizhen and hold him prisoner.

1450: Emperor Zhu Qizhen gets free from Mongols and is reinstated as Emperor. Tension and rivalry exist between Confucian scholars and other advisors, particularly the court eunuchs. Emperor Zhu Qizhen faces the urgent question: Should the court resume the voyages or end them?

Dynasties of China**Zheng He's Huge Ships****INTRODUCTION**

Some of Zheng He's ships were massive. His biggest ships were more than 400 feet long. Not only would they have dwarfed Columbus's Santa Maria, they would have dwarfed any other ship of the time. In fact, if you saw one sitting at a wharf today, you also might be impressed by its size. How big were Zheng He's ships? Make an illustrated graph on poster board that compares one of Zheng He's ships to some of the big things you have seen or know about.

MATERIALS NEEDED

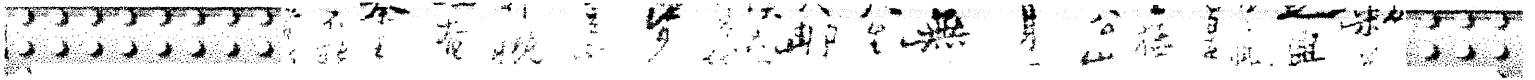
- poster board or butcher-block paper
- colored markers

GETTING STARTED

1. Do research to find four or five big things that you would like to compare to Zheng He's ships. You might choose a passenger airliner, the Queen Mary ocean liner, an 18-wheel truck, or your local football stadium, for example. Find out the measurements of these items. *include Columbus' Santa Maria.*
2. Create a graph to compare the length of the big things you have chosen. First create vertical and horizontal bar axis on a large piece of paper.
3. Mark off the vertical axis in measurements of 20 feet. Make sure your largest item will fit on the graph.
4. Draw a bar to show Zheng He's ship. Begin at 0 feet on the graph to show how long the ship was. Label it along the horizontal line at the bottom as "Zheng He's Ship." You may want to add an illustration of Zheng He's ship.
5. Add the other items you are comparing to the graph. Label them. Add illustrations to the graph of the other items you are comparing.
6. Display and discuss your completed graph.

CHECKLIST

- I constructed a bar graph.
- I included other items to compare with Zheng He's ship.
- I illustrated my bar graph.



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Zheng He

Zheng He, originally named Ma He, was born into a Muslim family just beyond the borders of China (later Yunnan Province in the southwestern part of China) in 1371. His ancestors were the Arabian immigrated into China during the Tang and Song dynasties (618-1279). When he was still young the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) conquered his province in 1378, and he was taken to the imperial Chinese capital to serve as a court eunuch.



However, he distinguished himself by helping Zhu Yuanzhang defeat the Yuan Dynasty, and was rewarded with an official post in the government. During the coup started by Zhu Di, who was the fourth son of the first emperor Zhu Yuanzhang of the Ming Dynasty and later became Emperor Chengzu, Zheng He helped Zhu Di gain the throne and was given command of the Chinese navy. Hence he wielded great influence in court.

In 1402, after Emperor Cheng Zu of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) ascended the throne, he dispatched Zheng He and Wang Jinghong to lead a giant fleet to the Western Sea (today's Southeast Asia), carrying members of soldiers and large quantity of goods. The fleet reached the countries of Southeast Asia, east Africa and Arabia, initiating a feat in the history of navigation and regarded as an unprecedented great historical period in Chinese history of trade and cultural exchanges.

From 1405 to 1433, Zheng He led his fleet to voyage to the Western Sea for seven times. The number of ships of his fleet was from 40 to 63 each time, taking many soldiers and sailors on the voyage, with a total party over 27,000 people. Their ships navigated the wide sea area from Ryukyu Islands, the Philippine Islands and Maluku Sea to the Mozambican Channel and the coastal areas of South Africa, developing mutual trade, exchanging culture and technologies, communicating traffic on the sea and promoting social and economic development in such countries and areas. The mighty fleet voyaged on the Indian Ocean, not only astonishing the Arabian navigators, but also amazing the Venice businessmen coming and going between Hormuz and Aden, hence providing a new enlightenment to the European navigation. Zheng

He's voyages are 87 years earlier than that of Columbus, 93 years earlier than that of Gama, and 116 years earlier than that of Magellan.

Chinese treasure ships carried a great deal of special Chinese products to foreign countries. As to craftwork, there were brocade, gauze, and skein; as to china, there were newly developed celadon, Xiulihong, as well as the enamelware with Chinese characteristics. By the way, during the Tang Dynasty Chinese people had grasped the technology of sintering glass, but only after Zheng He's voyage, Chinese had grasped the technology of adding borax in glass to resist heat. The Arabian glass artisan came to China with Zheng He's fleet and imparted the new technology to sinter new kinds of glass vessel resistant to sudden changes of temperature. Since then, this kind of glass was produced in large quantities in China and became a common utensil.

Zheng He also brought back building materials, fuels and exotic articles. It was at this time that the so-called kylin and Fulu (African giraffe and zebra) became decorative animals for the Chinese imperial garden. After coming back, Zheng He's subordinates wrote the books as *Travel Notes of Foreign Countries*, *Chorography of Western Countries*, etc., introducing the geographic and natural conditions, local customs, as well as production and living of those foreign countries and regions, widening Chinese people's vision and enlarging their knowledge on foreign countries.

Zheng He's expedition was half a century earlier than those of the European navigators. Zheng He died in 1435 at the age of 65. After Zheng He's last voyage no further voyages were launched.

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The Great Chinese Mariner Zheng He [Cheng Ho]

三寶太監

Remember Zheng He [Cheng Ho] 鄭和 !

Columbus sailed to America in St. Maria (eighty-five feet) in 1492. **Zheng He** sailed from China to many places throughout South Pacific, Indian Ocean, Taiwan, Persian Gulf and distant Africa in seven epic voyages from 1405 to 1433 ,some 80 years before Columbus's voyages.

Zheng He flag "treasure ship" is four hundred feet long - much larger than Columbus's. In the drawing below, the two flagships are superimposed to give a clear idea of the relative size of these two ships.

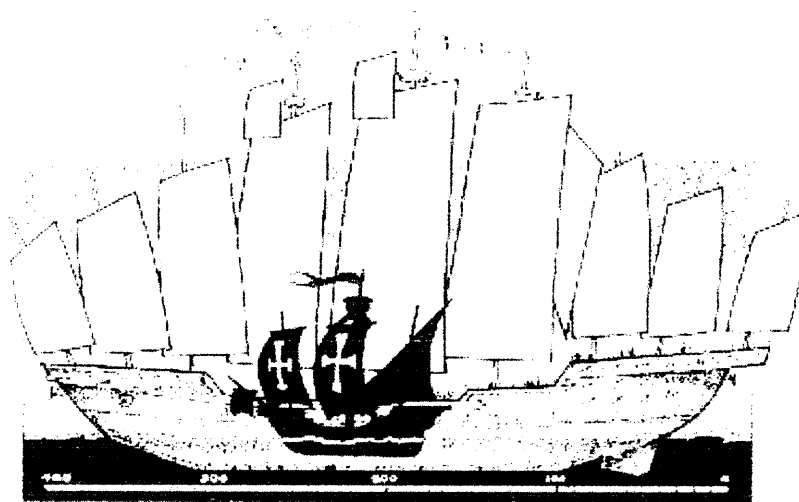


Figure 11. Columbus's St. Maria (85 feet) and the Zheng He's treasure ship (400 feet) superimposed to show relative size.

For more about Cheng Ho, there is a full-length book by Louise Levathes, "When China Ruled the Seas", reprinted by Oxford Univ. Pr, 1996, ISBN 0-195-112075