

Project Bright IDEA 2: Interest Development Early Abilities

**A Jacob Javits Gifted Education Program
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Concept: Conflict

Topic: Marco Polo- Great Explorer or Charlatan?

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Grade Level: 7

**The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Exceptional Children Division
Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program**

The American Association for Gifted Children at Duke University

Topic: Marco Polo – Great Explorer or Charlatan?
Text: *The Adventures of Marco Polo*
Author: Russell Freedman
Publisher: Arthur R. Levine Books. 2006

Concepts	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict • Exploration • Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credibility • Perseverance • Courage
Issues or Debates	Problems or Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credibility of explorer’s claims • Fear of the unknown • Marco Polo – Liar or great explorer • Kublai Khan – Humane ruler or tyrant • Polo’s impact on western culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Europeans had bias toward and stereotypes of Asia and Asians. • With few primary sources, historians/scholars disagree. • Many resources are needed for successful exploration.
Processes	Theories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map study of Polo’s exploration • Map making • Study of Kublai Khan’s empire • Discussion/debate of Polo’s claims and credibility • Individual research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploration may involve conflict. • Conflict brings about change. • Marco Polo opened the door to Asia. • Multiple translations and lack of primary sources can obscure the truth. • Humans often fear the unknown.
Paradoxes	Assumptions or Perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History may contradict exploration claims. • Asians labeled “barbarian” were actually more advanced than Europeans in many ways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The questions surrounding Marco Polo may never be answered. • Polo is one of the world’s greatest explorers. • Explorers are risk takers who possess courage, perseverance, and adaptability.

Concept: Conflict Topic: Marco Polo – Great Explorer or Charlatan?
Suggested Text Selection(s): *The Adventures of Marco Polo*
By Russell Freedman

Look, Listen and Identify:

Intelligent Behaviors

Applying past knowledge to new situations; thinking flexibly; persisting; questioning and problem posing; thinking and communicating with clarity and precision; creating, imagining, and innovating; thinking interdependently

Story Focus - Marco Polo's travels and explorations from Italy to the Mongol Empire in China and the resulting impact on the European perception of Asia. and Polo's influence on future explorers.

Student Activities - Questioning, imagining, researching, making inferences, comparing/contrasting, writing, evaluating, debating, creating, thinking and communicating with clarity and appropriate volume, listening with empathy.

NC Standards: Grade 7 social studies objectives 1.03, 2.01, 3.01, 4.03, 8.02, 8.03, 11.01, 11.02, 11.03

Local Pacing Guide Timeline:

Thinking Skills Focus: Comparison/contrast, evaluation, analysis, inference, drawing conclusions, summarizing

Topic Focus: Exploration – The Adventures of Marco Polo

Concept Focus: Conflict

Overarching Generalizations:

1. Conflict is universal.
2. Change may have positive or negative impact.
3. Exploration may be accompanied by controversy.

More Complex Generalizations (Two or more concepts):

1. Conflict may bring about change.
2. Exploration may result in change.
3. Exploration may involve conflict.

Essential Question(s):

(Include concept and intelligent behavior that leads to deeper understanding of the concept through exploration of the generalization)

1. Was Marco Polo one of the world’s greatest explorers or a charlatan who fabricated his exploits?
2. How were his explorations significant to the rest of the world?
3. Why will any exploration entail conflict?
4. Reflecting on Marco Polo’s change in perception of China and Kublai Khan, what do you think is essential to prevent conflicts of stereotyping and prejudging of others today?

Scaffolding Thinking to Complex Levels

Level 1: Conflict is sometimes a part of exploration.

Level 2: How and why is conflict sometimes a part of exploration?

Level 3: So what is the effect or significance of conflict in exploration?

Directions for Teachers:

Display sentence strips with the generalizations. Discuss topics and vocabulary words needed to gain a deeper understanding of the conceptual lessons.

Suggested Topics for Discussion:

Stereotyping and bias

Geography of Europe and China

Character traits (Habits of Mind) needed for rulers and explorers

13th century superstitious beliefs

Marco Polo – great explorer or liar?

Connecting 13th century Asian culture with present day culture

Suggested Vocabulary Words for Discussion:

oasis, oases	barbarian	enchanter
steppe	odyssey	plateau
yam	envoy	balm
concubine	paiza	courier
yurt	junk	saffron
emissary	pyre	
charlatan	loincloth	

A Six-Step Process for Teaching Academic Vocabulary Terms:

1. Provide a description, explanation or example of the new vocabulary term.
2. Ask students to restate the description, explanation or example in their own words using complete sentences.
3. Ask students to construct a picture, symbol or graphic representing the term or phrase.
4. Engage the students periodically in activities that help them add to their knowledge of the terms in a booklet that they have created (Keep it simple.)

5. Periodically ask students to discuss the terms with one another (**Think** of your favorite vocabulary words from the unit; **pair** with a vocabulary buddy, **share** by discussing the vocabulary terms with your vocabulary buddy.) Teacher should model process each time before students do the Think, Pair, Share with Vocabulary Buddy.
6. Construct games to periodically involve students and allow them to play with the terms.
(adapted from Robert Marzano)

Vocabulary Extension:

Sort the vocabulary words into three categories. Choose one of the categories and find a way to visually represent those words. Also, word maps, illustrations, synonym charts

Six Facets of Understanding

Facet 1 – EXPLANATION
In reference to Marco Polo’s adventures, explain the validity of the following generalization: Exploration involves conflict.
Facet 2 - INTERPRETATION
What inference can be made from Marco Polo’s adventures that could guide us in handling conflicts resulting from prejudice and stereotyping today? Marco Polo --- great explorer or Charlatan? Take a stand and defend it. You and your friends are at the local swimming pool. You jump from the diving board, yelling, “Marco!” From the water, your friend screams, “Polo!” Why? What do you mean? What is the origin of the game?
Facet 3 - APPLICATION
Which character traits of Marco Polo would be beneficial to a person challenged with an unknown situation? Explain your reasoning. In what situations would knowing the “Marco Polo” game be beneficial?
Facet 4 - PERSPECTIVE
Though Kublai Khan was considered by many to be “power hungry,” and his rule involved conflict, Marco Polo described him as a “just and humane ruler.” Do you agree or disagree with Polo? Support your point of view. You are a young girl in China, and your mother says it is time to begin binding your feet. Describe the process. How do you feel about this? Why?
Facet 5 – EMPATHY
Imagine you are a wife of Kublai Khan. Describe your daily life and share your feelings about it.
Facet 6 – SELF-KNOWLEDGE
Having read <i>The Adventures of Marco Polo</i> , what would you like to learn more about? On a sticky note or note card, write your question and place it on the “Parking Lot.” Find a classmate interested in a similar topic, and, together, find the information. (Teacher may decide how the information is to be presented.) What attributes are needed to be an outstanding explorer? Which of your characteristics would or would not make you a valuable member of Polo’s crew or of any other expedition?

Real World Connections with Products:

Summarize, compare/contrast, evaluate, defend, support, elaborate, explain, resolve, map, analyze, create, read, interpret, infer

Real World Applications:

Cartographer, researcher, diplomat, scientist, politician, teacher, sociologist, storyteller

Real World Terms:

Venice, Italy	resume	application	job description
conflict	exploration	expedition	Kublai Khan
narrative poem	storyteller		

Connect all products in the unit to real world applications reflecting the concept, generalizations and topic. The above is an example of how this might be accomplished.

MetaCognitive Discussion (Essential Questions):

(Whole Group)

- You and your friends are at the local swimming pool. You jump from the diving board, yelling, “Marco!” From the water, your friend screams, “Polo!” Why? What do you mean? Where does that come from? How could knowledge of this game be useful in a real life situation? (This is an opening hook, and could also be revisited at the unit’s conclusion.)
- Was Marco Polo one of the world’s greatest explorers or a “man of a million lies”? Defend your position.
- What can we learn from Marco Polo that is applicable to current issues or conflicts?
- Thinking about Polo’s *paisa* from Kublai Khan, what similar object would make your passage through school easier? What would it look like, who should authorize it, and how would you use it?
- How was Polo’s journey significant in the area of European overseas expansion?
- There is a gap of about 750 years between Marco Polo’s time and ours. What character traits did he possess that are valuable to anyone venturing into the unknown today?
- What conflicts are likely to occur in any exploration?

Conceptual Perspectives:

- Is exploration worth the conflict? Explain.
- What inference can be made from Marco Polo’s adventures that could guide us in conquering prejudice and stereotyping today?

Intelligent Behaviors:

Applying past knowledge to new situations
Thinking flexibly
Persisting
Questioning and problem posing
Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision
Creating, imagining, and innovating
Thinking interdependently

Literary Perspective:

Genre
Narrative poetry
Storytelling

Student/Teacher Reflections

Reflection can be accomplished through journal writing, discussion, artwork, etc.

Materials Needed for Task Rotations and/or Task Rotation Menus

- Examples of resumes, letters of application, sample job description, narrative poem sample, index cards, map-making materials
- Data/information on natural resources and population growth of Asia, Africa, or Australia
- Habits of Mind list and definitions
- Copies of *The Adventures of Marco Polo*
- Internet access for research
- List of Wake County character traits
- Maps of Asia and Europe

Exploration Through the Lens of Conflict

Task Rotation

MASTERY

What steps do you think Marco Polo and the members of his expedition must have taken to be prepared for possible conflicts on their journey? Use specific examples of conflict situations from the book and make inferences based on his descriptions.

What Habits of Mind did Marco Polo exhibit when dealing with specific conflicts?

INTERPERSONAL

Having read the story of Marco Polo's journey, write a list of questions that would have helped him recruit members for his exploration team to Asia. Make sure your questions address the HOM of the potential recruits.

How would these questions differ when looking for explorers in the 21st century?



UNDERSTANDING

How does the success of an exploration depend on dealing with conflicts? Explain your answer. What can explorers do before an exploration to prepare themselves for an encounter with conflicts?

What habits of mind should young people who want to become explorers cultivate and why?

SELF-EXPRESSIVE

Design an exploration game in which explorers have to deal with conflicts. Incorporate HOM these explorers need to tackle conflicts successfully.

For inspiration, use either Marco Polo's journey or create an exploration set in the twentieth or twenty-first century.

Task Rotation Learning Activities

Grade 7

All conceptual activities must include discussing and/or relating to the selected generalization(s) through essential questions.

<p style="text-align: center;">Mastery Learner (A) Sensing- Thinking</p> <p>Using the map on page 16-17, select five stops on Marco Polo’s route. Summarize what he found at each. Then explain for what each location is known today.</p> <p>SCOS Objectives: 1.03, 2.01</p> <p>HOM: 6</p> <p style="text-align: center;">V _ L _ S _ M _ B _ P _ I _ N _</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Interpersonal Learner (B) Sensing-Thinking</p> <p>Create a resume and a letter of application to convince Marco Polo to include you in his expedition. Consider Polo’s habits of mind and convince him that you possess many of the same habits and would make an excellent sidekick. With a partner, present a mock interview for the class.</p> <p>SCOS Objectives: 1.03, 4.03, 8.02, 8.03, 11.01, 11.02</p> <p>HOM: 1-16</p> <p style="text-align: center;">V _ L _ S _ M _ B _ P _ I _ N _</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Understanding Learner (C) Intuitive-Thinking</p> <p>Consider the perspectives of two individuals living in Polo’s time, one in Venice and one in Kublai Khan’s realm. In a two-voice presentation (poem, debate, etc.), compare their perceptions regarding religion, education, and government.</p> <p>SCOS Objectives: 11.01, 11.03</p> <p>HOM: 3, 4, 8, 9</p> <p style="text-align: center;">V _ L _ S _ M _ B _ P _ I _ N _</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Self-Expressive Learner (D) Intuitive-Feeling</p> <p>Some of Polo’s claims have been dismissed as false. Determine which claims sound improbable and, using creativity and humor, create a product (poem, illustration, performance) that ridicules his claims.</p> <p>SCOS Objectives: 3.03, 4.03, 11.01, 11.02</p> <p>HOM: 4, 7, 11,13, 14</p> <p style="text-align: center;">V _ L _ S _ M _ B _ P _ I _ N _</p>

Tiered Task Rotation Menu

Level	Mastery	Understanding	Interpersonal	Self-Expressive
1	Gather information about two other explorers, one from Africa, and one from Australia. Identify the most challenging conflict each encountered. Present your information and justification..	Choose an explorer from Africa, one from Asia, and one from Australia. In an essay, explain the motivation behind the explorations of each. How was this motivation perceived by the natives?	Which exploration would you most like to have been a part of? Explain in terms of contributions to society, geography, impact on culture, and your own interests.	Research past expeditions to Africa, Asia, or Australia. Make a list of items needed for such a trek at that time. Update this list for a current expedition to the same place.
2	Make a visual representation of three conflicts an explorer has actually encountered. What caused the conflicts, and how did the explorer resolve them? Demonstrate the effect each conflict had on the exploration.	After researching the lives of three explorers, deduce the personality or character traits embodied by them. How do these traits influence each explorer's motivation to embark on a specific venture? Present your conclusions in an essay or visual form.	Write an editorial explaining your belief that courage is an integral part of leadership in exploration. Give specific examples of prominent people who exhibit the courage needed to lead a successful exploration.	You need a sponsor for next year's expedition to somewhere in Asia, Africa, or Australia. Convince a possible sponsor of the value of financing your trip. How will the potential discoveries benefit society? Present your proposal in a brochure, power point, speech, or letter.
3	Plan an exploration and anticipate three conflicts likely to occur during the journey. Prioritize the top five habits of mind needed in solving the conflicts. Justify your ranking.	Explore the concept of courage, from rashness/ folly to adventurousness/ risk-taking to true valor. Select five important leaders and, using your own criteria, place each on a continuum of courage with a brief explanation of your reasoning.	Compare the existing Wake County character traits with the habits of mind. Develop a model of characteristics that would help us resolve conflicts in the future.	Design a visually appealing guide to resolving conflicts anticipated during an extended expedition. Explain how this guide could also be applied in resolving middle school conflicts.

Math Task Rotation Learning Activities

All conceptual activities must include discussing and/or relating to the selected generalization(s) through essential questions.

<p style="text-align: center;">Mastery Learner (A) Sensing- Thinking</p> <p>Number the Habits of Mind (1-16) in alphabetical order. Then create a graph to represent the degree of each habit Marco Polo displayed during his journey. Choose one other explorer to include on the graph as well.</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">V _ L _ S _ M _ B _ P _ I _ N _</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Interpersonal Learner (B) Sensing-Thinking</p> <p>Prioritize each Habit of Mind from most to least important to his expedition (1-16). Then write an equation to calculate a number value representing Marco Polo's overall Habits of Mind score based on how many times he demonstrated each habit throughout his journey. Write a paragraph evaluating Polo's overall score.</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">V _ L _ S _ M _ B _ P _ I _ N _</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Understanding Learner (C) Intuitive-Thinking</p> <p>Group the Habits of Mind into 3-4 subcategories. Determine the percentage of habits in each category that Marco Polo displayed throughout his journey. Using these percentages, write a paragraph explaining the impact his use of the Habits of Mind had on Polo's success.</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">V _ L _ S _ M _ B _ P _ I _ N _</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Self-Expressive Learner (D) Intuitive-Feeling</p> <p>Assign numbers to each of the 16 Habits of Mind. You can choose any kind of number, but you must justify your choice for each habit. Write a mathematical expression representing Marco Polo's use of the Habits of Mind during his journey. Then write a paragraph explaining your expression.</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">V _ L _ S _ M _ B _ P _ I _ N _</p>

Tiered Task Rotation Menu

Level	Mastery	Understanding	Interpersonal	Self-expressive
1	Identify the major stops on Polo's travels. Match them with their current names.	Collect information on Kublai Khan's realm (education, religion transportation, the military, religion, role of women, cuisine, culture, etc.). Why was he considered a humane ruler?	Generate a list of situations in your own life which were kinds of "explorations." Rank them from the most to the least challenging for you. Explain your rankings.	Read paragraph three on page 22. Discuss with a partner how this passage may have been the inspiration for the swimming pool game "Marco Polo."
2	On a map, chart Polo's journey. Label each stop.	Compare/contrast Kublai Kahn's realm with that of the US today. Use Dr. Robert Swartz's graphic organizer.	Select a time or experience in your own life which could be considered an "exploration." Relate that experience in five journal entries or poems which represent different periods of that situation.	Share with the class your own theory of the origin of the "Marco Polo" swimming pool game. Give a convincing and detailed explanation.
3	Present your knowledge of Polo's itinerary in the form of a History Channel television show.	In an essay, speech, or debate, evaluate the statement, "Kublai Kahn was a humane ruler."	In a narrative poem, song of several verses, or a comic book, tell the story of an exploration you would like to embark upon.	Create an original game inspired by the story of Marco Polo. Your game should involve movement and group interaction.

Task Rotation Assessments
7th Grade Social Studies

All conceptual activities must include discussing and/or relating to the selected generalization(s) through essential questions.

<p style="text-align: center;">Mastery Learner (A) Sensing- Thinking</p> <p>Make a list of ideas, goods, and inventions new to Europeans that Marco Polo encountered in Asia. Rank them in importance to western civilization today. Explain the criteria used in prioritizing your list and support your reasoning.</p> <p>Display your conclusions in a creative way.</p> <p>HOM: 1,4,6,7,9</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Interpersonal Learner (B) Sensing-Thinking</p> <p>Choose one of the following:</p> <p>Write a letter to Frances Wood, the most prominent critic of Marco Polo’s credibility, defending the explorer’s claims. You may choose, instead, to deliver a speech to your classmates, using only note cards.</p> <p>Write a letter to historian John Lerner of Glasgow University, Polo’s defender, asserting that Polo fabricated his claims. Offer extensive support for your opinion. You may choose, instead, to deliver a speech to your classmates, using only note cards.</p> <p>With a partner, present a mock debate, each taking a side to either defend or disprove Polo’s credibility.</p> <p>HOM: 1,2,3,4,5,9,15</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Understanding Learner (C) Intuitive-Thinking</p> <p>Choose one of the following:</p> <p>In an essay or PowerPoint, capture the significance of Marco Polo’s exploration of Asia and its impact on 13th century Italy and the United States today.</p> <p>Research 13th century Italy, China, Greece, and Russia. Which culture do you think was most progressive? Explain and support your conclusions.</p> <p>HOM: 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Self-Expressive Learner (D) Intuitive-Feeling</p> <p>Choose one of the following:</p> <p>Write a narrative poem relating Marco Polo’s travels to the kingdom of Kublai Khan and back. Let your poem demonstrate your knowledge of Polo’s itinerary and major experiences.</p> <p>You are a professional storyteller and actor. Tell the story of Marco Polo’s travels to your classmates. Use your voice, gestures, body movements, and dramatic expression to entertain your audience while providing information.</p> <p>Present the story of Marco Polo and his adventures in the form of a song.</p> <p>HOM: 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13</p>

Additional Support Materials:

Favorite Read-Alouds:

Excerpt from *The Adventures of Marco Polo* describing Polo's caravan caught in a blinding sandstorm (p. 19)

Quotes/ Songs:

"I have only told the half of what I saw." -Marco Polo

"Without stones, there is no arch." –Marco Polo

Video Clips:

United Streaming:

Before You Know It: Technology of Exploration. (a segment of "Greatest Inventions with Bill Nye: Exploration from Sea to Space.")

Discovery Atlas: China Revealed: Short Stories
"The Great Wall," " Important Inventions," "The Silk Road," etc.
The Explorers: The Dawning of the Era of Exploration

Paintings & Prints:

Marco Polo at the Court of Kublai Khan by F. Tockmay

Travels with Marco Polo by Nora Sturges (collection of paintings found at http://pages.towson.edu/nsturges/new_page_47.htm)

Teacher Reflections

Literary Selection:

Date:

School:

Grade:

1. What were the strengths of the task rotations and/or other activities?
2. How did the task rotations and/or activities reveal students' Intelligent Behaviors? Please discuss how each Intelligent Behavior manifested itself.
3. What would you change or add the next time you taught this lesson?
4. What opportunities for growth does the resource unit have?
5. What were "ah ha" moments for the students? For teachers?

APPENDIX

A

Additional Instructional Concept-Based Activities

Charlatans?

Students may research these controversial figures to decide the validity and impact of their claims.

John Brinkley
Oral Roberts
Rasputin
Giordano Bruno
L. Ron Hubbard

Conflict: Food for Thought

Students may use the following quotations as a springboard for discussion or product.

“If a man does not know to which port he is sailing, no wind is favorable.” (Seneca)

“By blending the breath of the sun and the shade, true harmony comes into the world.” (Tao Te Ching)

“A soft answer turneth away wrath.” (Bible)

“He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper.” (Edmund Burke)

“I hold it to be a proof of great prudence for men to abstain from threats and insulting words toward anyone, for neither diminishes the strength of the enemy; but the one makes him more cautious, and the other increases his hatred of you and makes him more persevering in his efforts to injure you.” (Niccolo Machiavelli)

“Difference of opinion leads to inquiry, and inquiry to truth.” (Thomas Jefferson)

“If civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships – the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together, in the same world at peace.” (Franklin Delano Roosevelt)

“The best way I know to defeat an enemy is to make him a friend.” (Abraham Lincoln)

“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” (James Baldwin)

“To be persuasive we must be believable; to be believable we must be credible; to be credible, we must be truthful.” (Edward R. Murrow)

“I never let the sun set on a disagreement with anybody who means a lot to me.” (Thomas Watson, Sr.)

“If we are to reach real peace in the world, we shall have to begin with children; and if they will grow up in their natural innocence, we won’t have to struggle; we won’t have to pass fruitless ideal resolutions, but we shall go from love to love and peace to peace, until at last all the corners of the world are covered with the peace and love for which consciously or unconsciously the whole world is hungering.” (Mohandas Gandhi)