



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2007 Volume II: Voyages in World History Before 1500

Traveling with Ibn Battuta and the Plague through the Islamic World, China, Europe, and Mexico, 1325-1350

Guide for Curriculum Unit 07.02.11
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This is a unit designed for seventh- or eighth-grade students of mixed ability levels. It will appeal to the students' interests and challenge their perceptions of religions and other cultures. It meets many standards of both the Language Arts and Social Studies curriculums. The unit examines four civilizations in the world within a brief time period, 1325 to 1350. It is set up like a travel adventure, complete with maps, itineraries, pirates, and hardships. It will begin with the travels of Ibn Battuta, the Muslim scholar from Tangier, and then it will explore other areas of the world that he did not visit. I have designed it for a Language Arts class, heavy on writing requirements, but it could easily be used in Social Studies. The major travel stops are as follows: Ibn Battuta at Mecca in 1326 and in Guangzhou (China) in 1346, the plague in London in 1349, and the founding of Tenochtitlan by the Aztecs in 1350. What the students learn will be tied to contemporary issues, such as crowd control at Mecca, the possibilities of a modern plague, and environmental degradation.

Along the journey, students will keep a journal; create maps and illustrations; deal with the travel problems of the period; learn about religions, governments, and social structures of the time; learn what food and accommodations were available; and deal with the hygiene and difficulties of life during this period. They will write and learn about history, geography, and themselves.

(Developed for Language Arts, grade 7; recommended for Social Studies, Language Arts, Reading, and Writing, grades 7-8)

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