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Mapping the Belt and Road Initiative

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Essential/Central Question: How does transportation infrastructure promote economic development and trade?

Lesson Summary: This lesson explores China's Belt and Road Initiative through a spatial perspective. Through this lesson, students will apply skills in online research, written synthesis of ideas, and spatial reasoning to develop a collaborative online map. They will also analyze the importance of factors such as natural resources, relative location, transportation infrastructure, and tourism in relation to economic development.

Grade levels and Courses: This lesson was designed for a high school class in AP Human Geography (10-12th grade). It would also be appropriate for an 11-12 grade economics, foreign policy, or AP Comparative Government course.

Duration: Two 80-minute block periods.

Plan of Instruction:

-- Day One --

1) Lesson Introduction (10 minutes):

Play the short China Global Television Network advertisement for the Belt and Road Initiative(Yidaiyilu) available at the following Youtube Link:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eB44qiDBytg

Have students write down their answers to the questions below. Then, elicit responses to open the class discussion.

- What images stood out to you most and why?
- What do you think the advertisement is promoting?

2) Building Prior Knowledge (25 minutes):

Explain that the Belt and Road Initiative (originally called the One Belt/One Road) project refers to China's plan to build an extensive international transportation network. Like the ancient Silk Road, this is intended to create a region of economic prosperity and trade. Have students read the World Bank's background article on the initiative (http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/regional-integration/brief/belt-and-road-initiative). Pass out the accompanying note sheet (handout one).

3) Applying Knowledge - Research Group Work (45 minutes)

- Xi'an China
- Gwadar, Pakistan

- Astana, Kazakhstan
- Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Jakarta, Indonesia
- Dushanbe, Tajikistan
- Nairobi, Kenya
- Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Athens, Greece
- Rotterdam, Netherlands

Distribute the Belt and Road Initiative map research note sheets (handout two).

Allow students the remainder of the class to conduct research. If students do not have online access in class, relevant articles can be printed ahead of time and distributed to groups. The number of groups can also be reduced based on class size or student research skill level. The research portion can also be assigned for homework.

-- Day Two --

1) Lesson Introduction (10 minutes): Have students examine their research notes

and discuss the following questions with their group members:

- Why do you think that this city has been included in Belt and Road Initiative projects?
- What are the three most important economic or geographic advantages of this city?
- If you were to identify three relevant sites in or around this city on a map, what would they be?

2) Groupwork: Research Synthesis and Collaborative Map Creation (40 minutes):

Explain to students that they will be assembling the findings of their research into a collaborative map. Each group will be creating markers for a portion of the map. The markers should identify the economic and geographic advantages of each location.

In order to create the collaborative map in MyMaps, the instructor should first follow the steps below:

- Go to Google Drive and click "new." Choose "More" and then click o"MyMaps."
- Click on "Untitled Map" to give the map a relevant name, such as "Period One's Collaborative Map."
- Click on "Untitled Layer" to name the layer "Belt and Road Initiative."
- Click on "Share" and change the sharing settings so that anyone with the link can edit. Then, share the URL with the students in the class. They will be able to add their markers to the map.

Pass out handout three to provide students with directions for contributing the collaborative map.

3) Presentation of Findings (20 minutes)

After students have added their findings to the collaborative map, allow each group two minutes to present its assigned region to the class. If time is limited, students may also explore the map on their own or for homework.

4) Closing Discussion (10 minutes)

After presentations, discuss the questions to close the lesson:

- What economic and geographic factors did the cities researched share in common?
- How is the Belt and Road project likely to promote economic development and trade in these cities?

Suggested Modifications:

While the lesson has been designed for a web-based mapping application, such as Google's MyMaps, it can also be completed with a hard-copy poster board map. Alternatively, students could present research in the form of a presentation or essay.

Elements of this lesson could also be adapted and simplified for younger students. For example, students in middle school could develop a collaborative map comparing sites on the Silk Road and sites included in the One Belt/One Road plan.

Summative Assessment:

Contributions to the collaborative map can be graded as individual or group summative assessments. Follow up assessments, such as an essay in response to the essential question, can also be assigned.

Readings/Websites/Documents/PowerPoints:

Belt and Road Portal

Kenneth Rapoza, "Kazakhstan Opens Astana International Financial Center In Hopes To Become Eurasian Finance Hub" (Forbes, 6/28/18) Nate, Berg, "These Chinese Buildings are Coming to a City Near You" (CNN, 5/28/18) Anja Manuel, "China is Quietly Reshaping the World" (The Atlantic, 10/17/17)

"Estonia Welcomes Belt and Road Initiative" (Xinhuanews.com, 2/6/18)

Clayton Dube. "The Chinese Dream" (video from the 2017 1990 Institute Teacher's Workshop: https://teachers.1990institute.org/2017/08/one-belt-one-road/)

Dr. Thomas Gold, "China on the Road to Rejuvenation" (video from the 2016 1990 Institute Teacher's Workshop: https://teachers.1990institute.org/2016/09/china-road-rejuvenation/)

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.