

Reading Ex. > Diagram Completion

AN INCREDIBLE JOURNEY

The Polos —Marco; his father, Niccolo; and his uncle, Maffeo— had been traveling for nearly three and a half years when they finally achieved their objective—a long-awaited meeting with the powerful Mongol leader Kublai Khan. The historic event took place in 1275 at the Khan's luxurious summer capital in Shangdu, in what is now northern China. Nonetheless, Niccolo and Maffeo had already known Kublai Khan from a previous visit nine years earlier, when both were invited to meet the Khan in Shangdu for trading products between Europe and East. Niccolo and Maffeo were among the first Westerners to travel the Silk Road to China.

The Polos' second trip had, in fact, started more than 9,000 kilometers away in Venice (their hometown) when Marco was just a teenager. On this trip, the Polos stayed in Asia for nearly 17 years under the Khan's power before they returned home. They made themselves useful to the Khan and undertook various missions and tasks for him. It is likely that the Khan considered it an honor that these Europeans—who were rare in China— had made this extremely difficult journey, and he took the opportunity to make good use of their skills and knowledge.

Marco's intellect and humility stood out, which helped to forge a close connection between him and Kublai Khan. While Marco was in the service of the Mongol emperor as an ambassador of the realm, he was able to learn and experience many things that were new to Europeans. In his travel journal, he wrote that Kublai Khan's palace was the greatest he had ever seen. He admired the Khan's recently completed new capital —*Daidu*—, whose streets were so straight and so broad. The city was in what is now the center of Beijing, and Kublai Khan's city planning can still be perceived in the straight, broad streets of China's modern capital.

We have learned from Marco Polo that, in the administration of his empire, Kublai Khan made use of a fast and simple message system established in 1200 by his grandfather, Genghis Khan the founder of the Mongol Empire. Horse riders spaced every 40 kilometers allowed messages to cover 500 kilometers a day. As soon as one horse had run 40 kilometers, the next horse would run the next 40 kilometers, and so on. Marco also learned the secret of asbestos cloth, which is made from a mineral and doesn't catch fire. Paper money also took him by surprise, since it was not yet used in the West at that time. Homes were heated with black stones, which burn like logs. Those stones were coal—unknown in most of Europe—and were so plentiful that many people had a hot bath three times a week.

Although the Khan did not want his visitors to leave, the Europeans finally received permission to return home in 1292, two years before Kublai's death. Marco continued his observations while on the ocean voyage by way of Sumatra and India. After he returned home, Marco completed a book about his trip, full of details about his amazing cultural experiences. It was probably the single greatest contribution to geographical knowledge ever made to the West about the East. Meanwhile, his father and uncle never returned to the Silk Road and Asia nor left Venetian provinces. *(Text taken, adapted and complemented from Macintyre, P. & Bohlke, D. (2020) Reading Explorer 2. 3rd Ed. National Geographic Learning. Boston, USA)*



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A. Based on the previous article, complete the Venn diagram below. Write each action (A-L) done by Marco Polo, Niccolo and Maffeo, and/or Kublai Khan where it corresponds.

- A. *had met each other before 1275.*
- B. *'s intelligence was noticeable.*
- C. *gave permission to go back home.*
- D. *became closer while worked together.*
- E. *decided to spend their time in their hometown.*
- F. *made a 3.5-year trip to meet a powerful ruler.*
- G. *took advantage of Marco's skills.*
- H. *did not know anything about paper money.*
- I. *worked nearly two decades for the empire.*
- J. *were Venetian merchants.*
- K. *started a commercial relationship.*
- L. *helped each other to manage the empire.*

