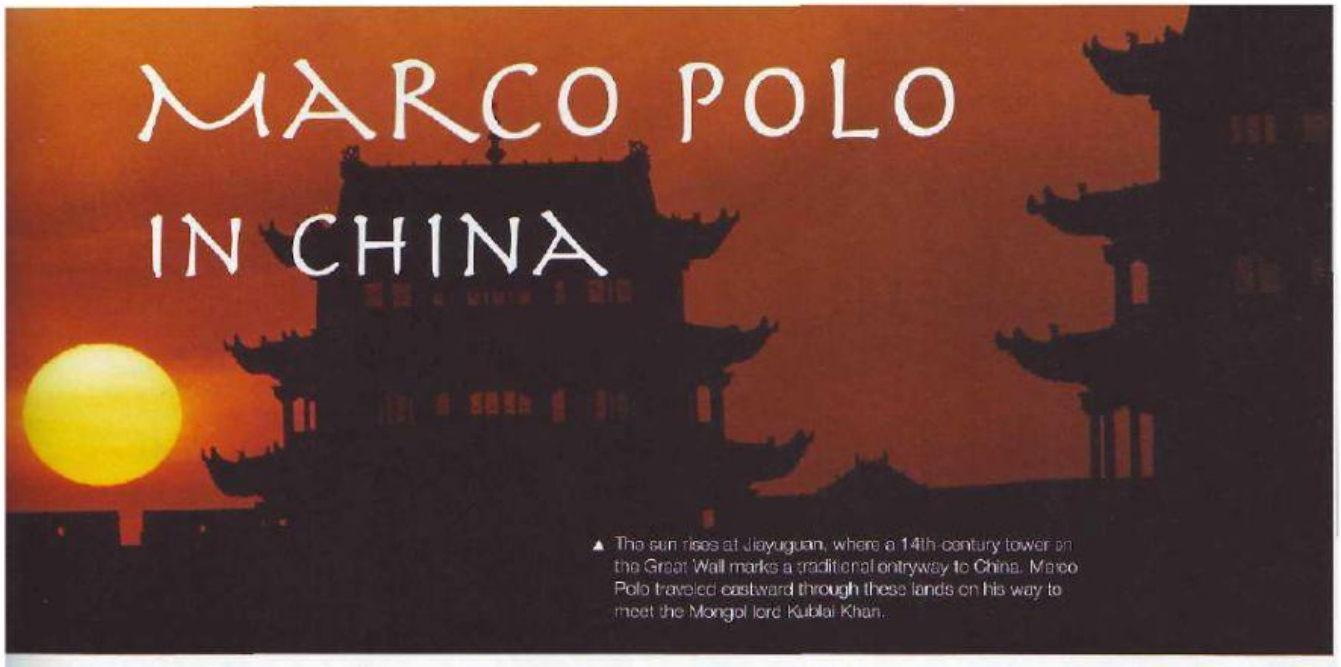
Queen Victoria English Centre

Name:……Date:……....4th seniors

READING COMPREHENSION-(reading explorer 2.Unit 8 A



MARCO POLO IN CHINA

▲ The sun rises at Jiayuguan, where a 14th-century tower on the Great Wall marks a traditional entryway to China. Marco Polo traveled eastward through these lands on his way to meet the Mongol lord Kublai Khan.

The Polos—Marco, his father Niccolò, and his uncle Maffeo—had been traveling for 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[1] in Shangdu, in what is now northern China. As he greeted his tired guests, Kublai Khan was surprisingly informal: "Welcome, gentlemen! Please stand up. How've you been? How was the trip?"

Marco Polo's trip had, in fact, started more than 9,000 kilometers (5,600 miles) away in Venice when he was just a teenager. His father and uncle already knew Kublai Khan from a previous visit five years earlier, when they had spent a short time in Shangdu. On this second trip the Polos would stay for 17 years, making themselves useful to the Khan and undertaking various missions[2] and tasks for him. It is likely that the Khan considered it an honor[3] that Europeans—who were rare in China—had made the extremely difficult journey, and he made good use of their skills and knowledge.

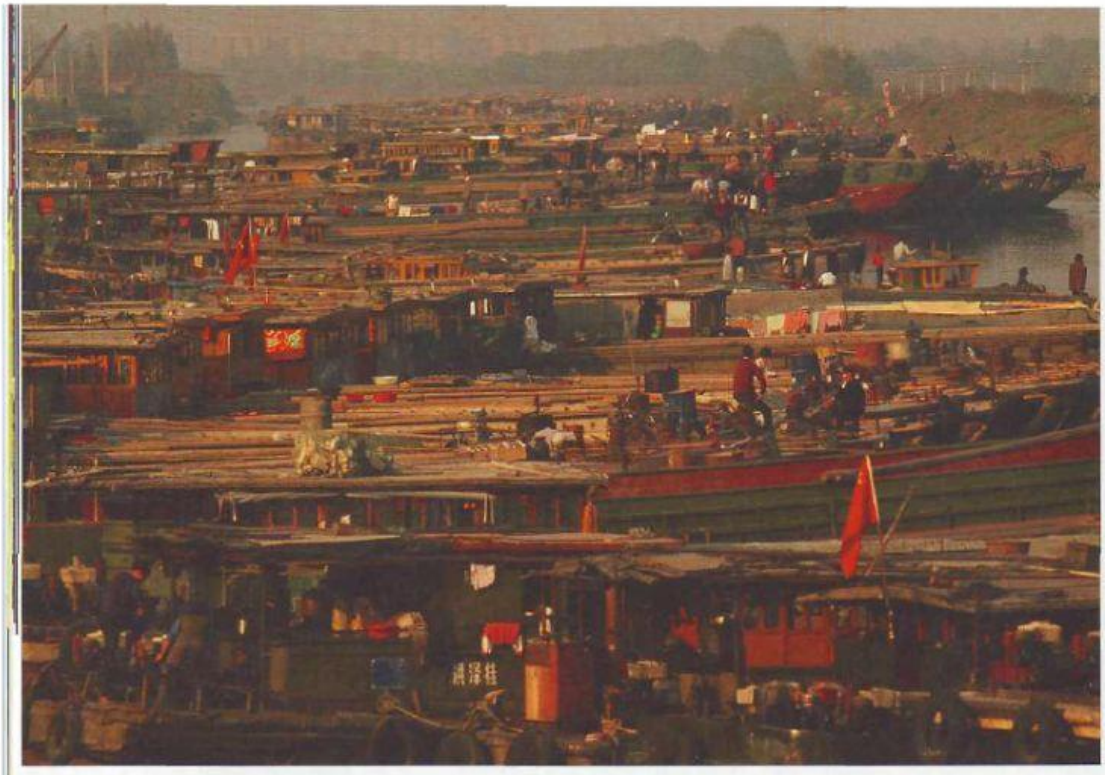
▲ Marco Polo's 24-year trip opened up a world that had never before been described by any European.

In the service of Kublai Khan, "the most powerful man in people and in lands and in treasure that ever was in the world," Marco was able to learn and experience many things that were new to Europeans. In his travel journal, he described Kublai Khan's palace as 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 located 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.

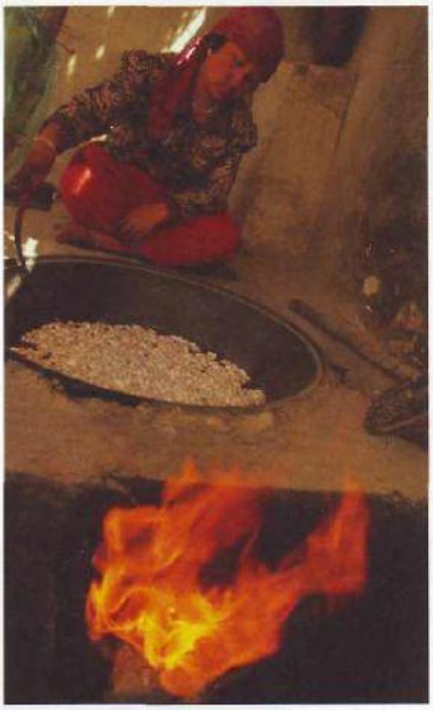
[1] The **capital** of a country is the city where its government meets.

[2] A **mission** is an important task that people are given to do, especially one that involves traveling.

[3] Something that is an **honor** is special and desirable.



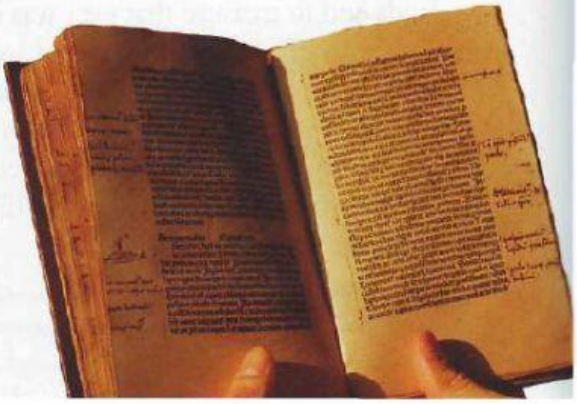
◄ Boats crowd an entrance to the Grand Canal near the Chinese port of Yangzhou. Marco wrote that he saw 15,000 boats a day sailing on the nearby Yangtze River.



▲ "Each day there come [to Daidu] . . . more than a thousand carts loaded with silk," wrote Marco. In some villages today, silk is still made the traditional way, by heating silkworm cocoons until they are soft enough to produce threads.

We learn from Marco Polo that, in the administration of his empire, Kublai Khan made use of a fast and simple message system. Horse riders spaced every 40 kilometers allowed messages to cover 500 kilometers a day. 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, as it was not yet in use 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 they 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 Polos finally received permission to return home in 1292. Marco continued his observations on the ocean voyage by way of Sumatra and India. Upon his return, he completed a book about his trip, full of details about his amazing cultural experiences. It was probably the greatest contribution of geographic information ever made to the West about the East.



Marco Polo completed his journal for "all people who wish to know . . . the different regions of the world." This valuable copy of his *Description of the World* is now kept in a library in Seville, Spain. ►

Reading Comprehension

A. Multiple Choice. Choose the best answer for each question.

Gist **1.** Who was Marco Polo?
a. a young man from Venice
b. a person who worked for Kublai Khan
c. a writer of a book about his travels
d. all of the above

Did You Know?

According to a biography by Christopher Columbus' son about his father, Marco Polo was an inspiration for Columbus' own voyages of discovery.

Detail **2.** Where is Kublai Khan's influence still felt in Beijing today?
a. in the food
b. in the streets
c. in the universities
d. in the buildings

Detail **3.** What allowed a message to cover 500 kilometers a day?
a. runners
b. horse riders
c. ships
d. asbestos

Inference **4.** What does the use of asbestos cloth, paper money, and coal seem to tell us about the East and the West?
a. The West had already improved on these areas of technology.
b. The East had learned various technologies from the West.
c. The West had forgotten these technologies still used in the East.
d. The East was ahead of the West in some areas of technology.

Reference **5.** In line 41, the word *it* refers to which noun?
a. culture
b. completion
c. book
d. contribution

B. Sequencing. Write the number of each event on the correct place on the timeline.

1. Marco begins working for Kublai Khan and traveling around China.
2. Niccolò and Maffeo depart to visit the Khan with Marco.
3. Niccolò and Maffeo visit the Khan without Marco.
4. Marco completes his book.
5. The three Polos leave China by ship.

Vocabulary Practice

▲ Tourists gather outside the Doge's Palace, Venice. Preserved as a museum, the building is much the same now as it was in Marco Polo's day.

A. Completion. Complete the information with the correct form of words from the box. One word is extra.

objective	**undertake**	**journal**	**palace**	**admire**
perceive	**administration**	**mineral**	**voyage**	**contribute**

After surviving the dangers of the ocean **1.** _____ from China with the pleasant **2.** _____ of reaching his home city of Venice, more troubles were waiting for Marco Polo. Italy at that time was not united under one governmental **3.** _____, and the cities were often at war with each other. During fighting between Venice and the city of Genoa, Marco Polo was put in prison. It was there that he met the writer Rustichello. Rustichello **4.** _____ to Marco Polo's future fame by helping him to write down a(n) **5.** _____ of his world travels.

Nevertheless, some readers of Marco Polo's book have **6.** _____ that important details were left out, and they question the truth of the book. In order to check the truth of Marco Polo's journal, National Geographic photographer Michael Yamashita followed the path of Marco Polo. He **7.** _____ the task of checking the facts in the book and found that many are indeed true.

Nowadays, Marco Polo's doubters are few, and most people **8.** _____ him for his amazing travels. A sculpture honoring Marco Polo was placed in the Doge's **9.** _____ in Venice, one of the city's most beautiful buildings.

B. Definitions. Complete the definitions using the correct words from the box in **A**.

1. When you _____ a task or job, you start doing it and accept responsibility for it.
2. A(n) _____ is a long journey on a ship.
3. If you _____ someone or something, you like and respect them very much.
4. If you _____ something, you see, notice, or realize it, especially when it is not obvious.
5. A(n) _____ is a very large impressive house, especially the official home of a king, queen, or president.
6. _____ is all the activities associated with organizing and running a company or country.
7. Your _____ is what you are trying to achieve.
8. A(n) _____ is a notebook or diary.
9. If you _____ to something, you do something to help make it successful.

Word Partnership

Use ***undertake*** with:
(*v.*) undertake **an action**, undertake **a project**, undertake **a task**