

Trade Route Simulation

Educational Guide: Activity

Grade Level: 5-12

Time: Daily activity for the week

Origin: Petra

Key Words: Nabataeans, trade, monopoly, annexed, Arabian Peninsula, caravans, commerce, taxes

More about this resource:

This site turns your classroom into a simulation of the Nabataeans' monopoly of trade.

This project includes:

- A summation of Nabataean trade
- Procedure for a simulation of trade within your classroom
- Materials needed for this project

Michigan Framework:

Strand 4 Economic Perspective

Standard 4.5 Trade

Students will describe how trade generates economic development and interdependence and analyze the resulting challenges and benefits for individuals, producers, and government.

Benchmark 4.5.8

Describe the historical development of the different means of payment such as barter, precious metals, or currency to facilitate exchange.

Strand 5 Inquiry

Standard 5.2 Conduction Investigations

Students will conduct investigations by formulating a clear statement of a question, gathering and organizing information from a variety of sources, analyzing the interpreting information, formulating and testing hypotheses, reporting results both orally and in writing, and making use of appropriate technology.

Benchmark 5.2.3

Construct answers to the question posed and support the answer with evidence.

Benchmark 5.2.4

Report the results of their investigation.

Benchmark 5.2.7

Construct an answer to the question posed and support it with evidence.

Benchmark 5.2.8

Report the results of their investigation including the procedures followed.

Benchmark 5.2.11

Construct answers to the questions posed and support their answers with evidence.

Benchmark 5.2.14

Report the results of their investigation including procedures followed and a rationale for their conclusions.

Lesson Site

Petra Lost City of Stone

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The Nabataeans led fruitful lives as desert traders. They acquired control of the ancient incense and spice trade throughout the Arabian Peninsula by the first century B.C. For a time, they had a monopoly on the huge caravans of luxury goods on their way to Europe and Northern Africa. The Nabataeans were skilled in creating underground cisterns to collect water and capable of constructing canals to master the transport and storage of valuable desert water to accommodate their many visitors. The Romans annexed the region in AD 106. The discovery of alternate trade routes to the north and south of Nabataean cities meant the loss of their monopoly. This economic downturn began the city's long slow decline.

This activity helps students to gain knowledge and to experience firsthand the importance of trade in generating economic development to individuals and/or groups. Students should be encouraged at the conclusion of this simulation to analyze the results and benefits they have experienced. It would be appropriate at the conclusion to have the students respond to the lead question orally or in writing, speaking from their personal experience.

Procedure:

As a class, students will be presented with the lead question, "How did the Nabataeans develop a trade monopoly and what caused its decline?" Students should be encouraged to brainstorm their ideas in response to this question, after which a small group of students would be elected or chosen to be the Nabataeans. A trade route would be established in the classroom that would require all students to pass by the Nabataean Trade Route in order to enter or leave the classroom. Trading chips (pop rings, milk caps, laminated circles, a student-designed coin, or a chip of the teacher's choice) would be given to all students daily in equal amounts. The Nabataean Trade Route in the classroom would be the only source of water, pencils, paper, and any other needed item on a daily basis. This trade route would be open for a given amount of minutes during transitions or could accommodate critical needs when needed.

These chosen Nabataeans would maintain their monopoly on trade for three days. On the fourth day, however, two other trade routes would open for business, offering the same items at the same time. These traders could name themselves and would maintain the same requirements for trade.

Following this activity, students should write their experience. These writings need to be shared with conclusions drawn about factors that led to the Nabataean decline.