

IN BRIEF

Marco's Epic Journey tells the true tale of a boy who went all the way from Europe to China! In this pack you will find activities inspired by his travels and fun facts about explorers, compasses and the famed Silk Road!



1. LITERACY LESSON IDEAS

- This month's issue has some words that students might not recognise. Encourage them to look up any unfamiliar words in the **Storytime Glossary** – this is a brilliant way to build their vocabularies.
- We might not have travelled across the world like Marco Polo, but everyone has gone *somewhere* and had interesting experiences! The **Class Discussion Sheet** has questions about places that kids have gone, the things they saw there and the challenges they faced along the way. There is a bit of explorer in all of us!
- The exercise on the **Reading Comprehension Sheet** challenges children to find *adjectives*, an *adverb* and a *rhetorical question* in an extract from the story and also asks them to think of some opposites.
- The events of Marco Polo's journey have been jumbled up on the **Story Sequencing Sheet**. Can your students number them to show the order they *should* be read in? Encourage them to go back and re-read the story if they are not sure about which events happened when!
- Children can tell the story of Marco Polo their own way on the **Storyboard** page by writing about his adventures underneath the pictures!
- What did students find out about Marco Polo in the story, and what do they think he was like? The **Character Sheet: Marco Polo** activity has questions about the famous traveller for them to answer...

Continued on page 2...

1. LITERACY LESSON IDEAS CONTINUED

- The **Fill in the Gaps!** sheet has an account of Marco Polo's journey – but several key words are missing! Students should go through the story in the magazine and use the information they find there to add in the missing words!
- The **Incredible Places Wordsearch!** challenges students to find ten places that Marco Polo visited on his travels – as well as the name of a certain famous person that he met along the way.

2. HISTORY LESSON IDEAS

- The path that Marco Polo took to China was part of a network of trade routes called the Silk Road. It linked Europe with the Far East for many centuries! The **Silk Road Facts** sheet is full of amazing information about it – students will find out how it got its name, what was traded along it, and the role it played in history.
- Marco Polo saw lots of incredible things on his journeys across Asia, and many of them were not known in Europe at that time. However, he did *not* see all of the things listed on the **What Did Marco Find?** page! Ask your pupils to work out which things he actually found, and which 'facts' are actually fibs! Can they come up with reasons why they think things are true or false? Are there any items that surprise them?
- The **Amazing Explorers!** sheet has interesting facts about seven famous explorers, including Marco Polo. Which ones have pupils heard of, and which ones are new to them? A follow-up exercise might involve tracing the journeys of one or more of the explorers on a map.

Continued on page 3...

3. GEOGRAPHY LESSON IDEAS

- Compasses are handy things for travellers – if you have one, you always know how to find north, south, east and west! The **Cool Compasses!** page introduces students to these cool traveller's tools and tells them how they work and how to use them. There is even an activity where they can make their own simple compass with a bowl of water and a magnetized needle!
- The **Guess Where?** activity gets children to use their map-reading skills to trace Marco Polos' expedition across a map of Europe and Asia. Using the story in the magazine for guidance, they should draw a line from place to place, marking their route from Venice to Shangdu.

4. P.E. LESSON IDEA

- A game named after Marco Polo can make a fun outdoor or indoor activity for a class! The **Let's Play 'Marco Polo'!** game tells you how to set it up. You need is a marked-out area and several kids who want to have fun! It helps if there is an adult around to make sure everyone follows the rules...

5. ART LESSON IDEAS

- Marco Polo didn't walk all the way to China – he often rode on horses and camels! The **Colour in a Camel!** sheet gives students a chance to decorate one of these cool creatures with their coloured pens or pencils. They can also add bells, tassels and other decorations... plus the luggage and supplies needed for a long journey!
- Can your class give Marco's journey a modern twist? The **Polo's Photos** drawing page has modern social media-style frames for them to draw pictures of what the intrepid explorer might have seen. Get them to create images that match the descriptions given underneath each frame...

STORYTIME GLOSSARY

If you spot a word you don't know in the magazine, look it up here!

High Fliers! (Page 6)

- ▷ **Squelching** – walking through mud while making noises like 'squelch'
- ▷ **Clod** – lump
- ▷ **Sorrowful** – sad
- ▷ **Sketched** – drew roughly
- ▷ **Bloomers** – large, baggy underpants
- ▷ **Wobbled** – shook unsteadily
- ▷ **Criss-crossed** – marked with crossed lines
- ▷ **Gleaming** – shiny
- ▷ **Hooves** – large, hard toenails on the feet of certain animals
- ▷ **Navigation** – working out where to go
- ▷ **Chimney** – tube for smoke to escape from

Robin Hood and his Merry Men (Page 10)

- ▷ **Outlaw** – person who breaks the law
- ▷ **Whistling** – making a high-pitched noise by blowing between his lips
- ▷ **Pouch** – little bag
- ▷ **Heart-warming** – happy and positive
- ▷ **Grumbled** – complained in a grumpy way
- ▷ **Cathedral** – large and impressive church
- ▷ **Harpist** – person who plays a harp
- ▷ **Scowled** – frowned in an angry way
- ▷ **Nobles** – important lords

The Girl and the Puma (Page 15)

- ▷ **Fertile** – good for growing things
- ▷ **Crops** – plants that are grown on farms

- ▷ **Newcomers** – people who arrived recently
- ▷ **Settlers** – people who come to set up homes in a new area
- ▷ **Surrender** – give up
- ▷ **Blazing** – bright
- ▷ **Lair** – hidden home of an animal
- ▷ **Chorus** – many-voiced group
- ▷ **Ravenous** – very hungry
- ▷ **Chores** – jobs around the home
- ▷ **Sneered** – said in a disrespectful way
- ▷ **Pounced** – jumped to attack

The Dragon's Diet (Page 20)

- ▷ **Rumbling** – deep, rough, continuous noise
- ▷ **Damp** – slightly wet
- ▷ **Tremble** – shake as if scared
- ▷ **Shrugged** – raised up his shoulders
- ▷ **Picky** – fussy and hard to please
- ▷ **Turned up his nose at** – rejected
- ▷ **Gulped down** – quickly swallowed
- ▷ **Crawled** – crept on his belly

The Magic Book (Page 22)

- ▷ **Barged** – roughly pushed
- ▷ **Shilling** – a kind of coin
- ▷ **Chambers** – rooms
- ▷ **Diagrams** – simple drawings
- ▷ **Peculiar** – strange
- ▷ **Baron** – kind of lord
- ▷ **Astounded** – extremely surprised
- ▷ **In exchange** – in return

Continued on page 2...

STORYTIME GLOSSARY

2 OF 2

- ▷ **Stallion** – male horse
- ▷ **Bridle** – head harness for attaching reins
- ▷ **Whinnied** – made a nervous horse sound
- ▷ **Vulture** – kind of large scavenger bird
- ▷ **Permanent** – lasting forever
- ▷ **Humble** – simple and unimpressive
- ▷ **My undoing** – the thing that led to me being in serious trouble

The Man Who Told the Truth (Page 30)

- ▷ **Nonsense** – something that makes no sense
- ▷ **Mused** – said thoughtfully
- ▷ **Attendants** – people who serve him
- ▷ **Statement** – thing that is said
- ▷ **Stables** – building where horses and other animals are kept
- ▷ **Midday** – the middle of the day
- ▷ **Chuckled** – laughed softly
- ▷ **Trotted** – rode quickly

The Cheese Thieves (Page 34)

- ▷ **Goblins** – small troublemaking creatures
- ▷ **Make mischief** – play tricks and cause trouble
- ▷ **Monstrous** – big and horrible
- ▷ **Lullaby** – song sung to put kids to sleep

- ▷ **Doted on** – loved and cared for
- ▷ **Bulging** – sticking out
- ▷ **Odour** – smell
- ▷ **Soot** – black powder from fire
- ▷ **Dealt with** – done something about
- ▷ **Prowled** – sneaked as if hunting
- ▷ **Oozing** – slowly dripping
- ▷ **Crusty** – with a hard crust
- ▷ **Emerged from** – came out of
- ▷ **Wafted** – drifted
- ▷ **Descendants** – younger people who were related to her

Marco's Epic Journey (Page 39)

- ▷ **Beggars** – people who ask for money
- ▷ **Dock** – place where ships are tied up
- ▷ **Swaggered off** – walked away confidently
- ▷ **Trading voyage** – sea journey to buy and sell things in other lands
- ▷ **Chortled** – laughed
- ▷ **Raging** – wild and dangerous
- ▷ **Bandits** – robbers
- ▷ **Rickety** – badly built
- ▷ **Customs** – ways of living their lives
- ▷ **Acres** – an acre is an area equal to 4046 square metres
- ▷ **Empire** – state that rules over many other countries

CLASS DISCUSSION SHEET

LET'S TALK ABOUT... **Going on journeys!** Marco Polo went on a great expedition from Europe to China. What trips have *you* been on, and what did you discover?

1. Think about a trip that you have been on. It doesn't have to be to another country – it could be to another city or town, or even a new place in the area you live in. Where was it? Did you enjoy the experience?

2. What was the most interesting thing about the place you visited? Think about the people, buildings or displays that you saw, as well as things that you ate or drank there!

3. Marco Polo faced a lot of dangers on his trip across Asia, including bandits and bad weather in the Himalayas. What challenges or difficulties did you face on your journey, and how did you overcome them?

WAYS WE TRAVEL

In the Middle Ages, Marco Polo travelled by sailing ship, horse, camel and even on foot. Nowadays, we have many other means of transportation which would have made his journey much safer and quicker. Can you list four modern ways of getting from place to place?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

NAME _____

CLASS _____

READING COMPREHENSION SHEET

Can you spot the rhetorical question, a pair of adjectives and an adverb in this extract from Marco Polo's story?

66

Marco was not sure what to expect when he met the great ruler.

Would he be loud and fierce? The boy was surprised to discover that the khan was a quiet man in a white robe.

He smiled gently as Marco, Maffeo and Niccolò bowed down to him.

99

1. What word changes the meaning of the word 'sure' in the first sentence?

2. A rhetorical question is a question that is not meant to be answered, but is used to make a point. Can you spot the rhetorical question in the extract?

3. In the second sentence, which two words are *adjectives* (describing words)?

4. Can you spot the *adverb* in the last sentence? An adverb describes *how* something is done.



WHAT ARE THE OPPOSITES?

Can you work out which words mean the opposite of these three adjectives from the extract!

Loud: _____

Fierce: _____

White: _____

ANSWERS: 1. Not. 2. The second sentence is a rhetorical question. 3. Loud and fierce. 4. Gently.
What are the Opposites? Quiet, gentle and black.

STORY SEQUENCING SHEET

Marco has jumbled up the events in his diary! Can you help him work out the correct order for them to go in?

Niccolò told Marco that they were going back to China – and they wanted to take Marco with them. He agreed to go!

Marco thought that the Great Khan might be fierce, but he was very polite to the visitors from Venice.

Marco's father Niccolò and his uncle Maffeo told him all about their journey to the Far East.

They crossed the high Pamir Mountains and Himalayas. It was very cold there, and it was hard to breathe because the air was so thin.

They finally reached the Persian city of Hormuz, which was a great trading port. They planned to get a ship to China from there.

They said that they had gone all the way to China and met the Great Khan of the Mongols, who ruled that land.

After many months of travelling, the Venetians reached China and the city of Shangdu, which was the capital of Kublai Khan's empire.

But Marco thought that the ships in Hormuz looked dangerous, so they decided to go east by land instead.

Marco Polo ran down to Venice's harbour to see a ship arrive. It was carrying his father, who he had never met before!

He asked Marco to tell him all about his homeland and promised to show him the wonders of his empire.

Marco, Niccolò and Maffeo sailed from Venice to the city of Acre, and then travelled over the dangerous Caucasus Mountains.

NAME _____

CLASS _____

STORYBOARD

Retell the story of Marco Polo by writing about what happened to him on his journey to China underneath the pictures below...

1



2



3



4



NAME _____

CLASS _____

CHARACTER SHEET: MARCO POLO

Marco was a young boy when he went on his amazing journey to Asia. Having read his story, what do you think he was like as a person?



Choose one adjective to describe Marco Polo!

What item of clothing would he have wanted to bring on his trip?

Can you name three dangers that Marco faced on his journey?

What do you think was Marco's favourite thing about his trip to China?

Draw a picture of a souvenir that Marco might have brought back from China!



What do you think he might have missed about his home in Venice while he was travelling?

FILL IN THE GAPS!

Some important facts are missing from this story about Marco Polo! Can you fill in the missing words? You can reread the story if you don't remember something!



Marco Polo came from the city of A. _____. When he was B. _____ years old, his C. _____ and D. _____ came back from a long journey. They told him about their travels to the land of E. _____, where they met the Mongol ruler F. _____ Khan.

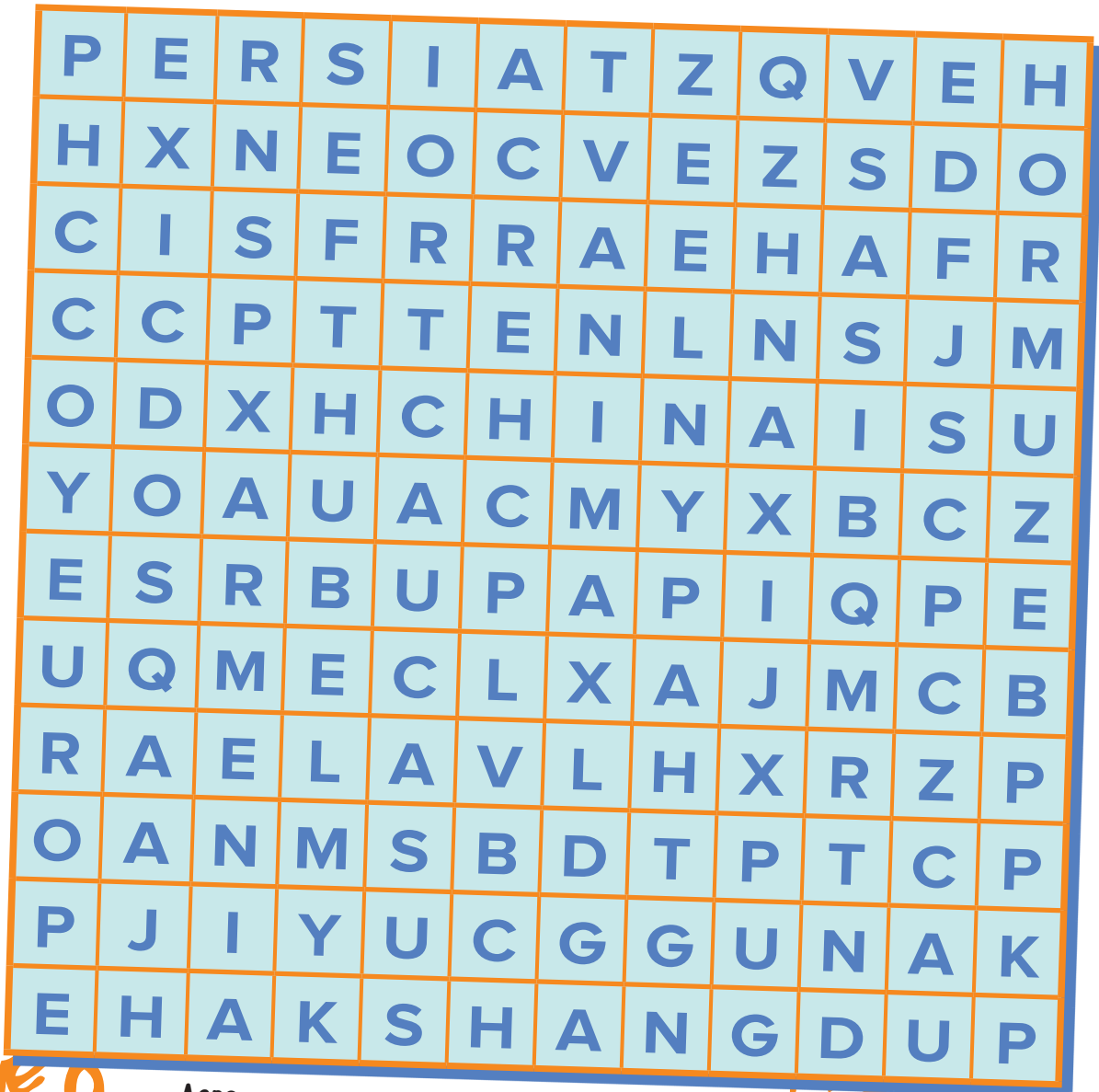
Marco joined his father and uncle on their next journey! They sailed to the city of G. _____ and headed east. After crossing the Caucasus Mountains, they reached the port of H. _____. They travelled over some more high I. _____. The temperature was J. _____ and the air was K. _____.

Finally, they arrived in Kublai Khan's capital of L. _____. Marco thought that the ruler might be M. _____ and N. _____, but he greeted them politely!

ANSWERS: A. Venice, B. Fifteen, C. father, D. uncle, E. China, F. Kublai, G. Acre, H. Hormuz, I. mountains, J. cold, K. thin, L. Shangdu, M. loud, N. fierce.

INCREDIBLE PLACES WORDSEARCH!

Marco Polo visited many amazing lands on his journey! Can you find the names of ten places he went to in this wordsearch, as well as the name of one very important person that he met?



Acre
Venice
Europe
China

Shangdu
Persia
Hormuz
Armenia

Himalayas
Caucasus
WHO: Kublai



ANSWERS:

NAME _____

CLASS _____

SILK ROAD FACTS

Marco Polo travelled to China along the Silk Road. This network of land and sea routes connected China with Europe for hundreds of years. Here are some incredible facts about it!

It was called
'The Silk Road'
because silk cloth
was one of the most
valuable products
made in China.

**Silk is
made by
silkworms**,
the larvae of the
silkworm moth. They
spin silk thread out
of their bottoms!

The Chinese
did not want anyone
else to make silk.
**It was forbidden
to take silkworms
out of China** – anyone
caught doing this would
have been in BIG trouble.

The Silk Road
was *really* long!
It stretched over
**4000 miles
(6400km)!**

It existed
for about
1500 years,
from 130 BCE until
1453 CE. It ended when the
Ottoman Empire closed
off trade with the West.

Travel on the
Silk Road could be
dangerous!
Wars sometimes
blocked the way,
and bandits preyed
on travellers!

Some theories
say that infected
rodents carried a
disease called the
Black Death
across the Silk Road!

Silk wasn't the
only product carried
along the Silk Road.
**Tea, perfumes,
spices and
porcelain**
were traded for Western
gold, honey and wine.

Many inventions
spread along the Silk
Road, including paper
making, printing, gunpowder
and the compass, known as
**the Chinese
Four Great
Inventions!**

Europeans did not
like paying high prices
charged by merchants who
travelled on the Silk Road.
They tried to sail directly to East
Asia instead – this was what
**Christopher
Columbus**
doing when he discovered
the Americas!!

**THE SILK ROAD WAS
IMPORTANT BECAUSE...**

NAME _____

CLASS _____

WHAT DID MARCO FIND?

Marco Polo saw many amazing things on his journey to China.

Tick the eight things you think he discovered on his travels!



☐ Zebras



☐ Postal service



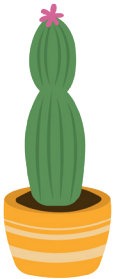
☐ Flamingos



☐ Silk



☐ Porcelain



☐ Cactus



☐ Football



☐ Paper money



☐ Spices



☐ Ice skates



☐ Coal



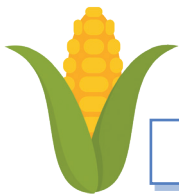
☐ Telephone



☐ Crocodiles



☐ Reading glasses



☐ Sweetcorn

DID MARCO DISCOVER PASTA?

Some people say that Marco Polo introduced pasta to Europe after eating it in China, but most historians think this is unlikely. He does mention noodle dishes and lasagne in *The Travels of Marco Polo*, but pasta was already known in Italy by the time of his journey. Most food historians agree that the Arabs introduced pasta, spinach, aubergine and sugar cane to the Mediterranean in the 12th century CE. Historical texts and poems also mention a food similar to pasta that was eaten during the time of the Ancient Greeks!

ANSWER: Marco Polo saw the Chinese burning coal, using glasses to read, and paying for things with paper money. He also saw spice plantations, silk, porcelain, crocodiles and a postal service that used horses to deliver mail over long distances.

AMAZING EXPLORERS!

Here are the top explorers that you need to know about!

Marco Polo

Lived: 1254-1324 CE

From: Venice, Italy

Great Journey: With his father and uncle, he travelled all the way to China and met the Great Khan.

Fun Fact: He became an agent of the Khan and travelled widely in his empire!

Ibn Battuta

Lived: 1304-1369 CE

From: Tangier, Morocco

Great Journey: During his life, he made trading journeys to Europe, Africa, China and India.

Fun Fact: In the city of Dubai, there is a shopping mall named after him!

Zheng He

Lived: 1371-1433 CE

From: Yunnan, China

Great Journey: He led seven great voyages from China to Asia, Southeast Asia and Africa.

Fun Fact: He brought a giraffe back from Africa as a gift for the emperor!

Christopher Columbus

Lived: 1451-1506 CE

From: Genoa, Italy

Great Journey: He led an expedition to the Americas, landing in Cuba.

Fun Fact: Columbus thought that he had reached Asia, which is why he called the Native Americans 'Indians'!

Ferdinand Magellan

Lived: 1480-1521 CE

From: Sabrosa, Portugal

Great Journey: He led the first voyage all the way around the world!

Fun Fact: Magellan died on the voyage, but one of his three ships made it back to Portugal!

Roald Amundsen

Lived: 1872-1928 CE

From: Borge, Norway

Great Journey: He was the first person to reach the South Pole, using dog-sleds to travel across Antarctica.

Fun Fact: He also went to the North Pole by airship!

Felicity Aston

Lived: 1977-present

From: Sevenoaks,
United Kingdom

Great Journey: She was the first person to ski solo across Antarctica.

Fun Fact: She spent three summers and two winters in Antarctica!

COOL COMPASSES!

North, south, east and west are often used when navigating, and the compass is a cool device that can tell you which direction is which!

North is the direction where the Earth's North Pole lies. The Earth's axis (the line around which it spins) goes through the North and South Poles.

West is ninety degrees from north and south. It is the direction in which the Sun sets in the evening.



East is ninety degrees from north and south and is the direction in which the Sun rises in the morning.

HOW TO USE:

You will see a needle on a compass that is red at one end. The red end points north, so turn the dial so the 'N' on the dial is at the point of the red end of the needle. You can now see where the other directions are on the face of the compass!

South is the direction in which Earth's South Pole lies.



MAKE A COMPASS!

YOU WILL NEED: a steel needle, a magnet, a slice of cork (ask a grown-up to cut one for you), sticky tape and a bowl of water. **A large, blunt needle works best!**

First, rub the needle on the magnet 50 or more times, going in one direction only (not back and forth!). This will 'magnetise' it. Then, tape the needle onto the cork and float the cork in the bowl of water. The needle should turn to face north and south!

FUN FACT!

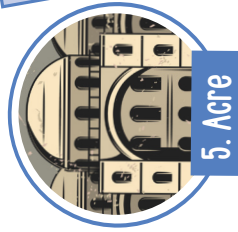
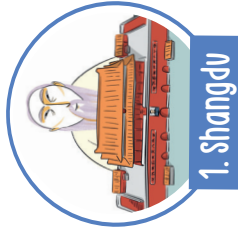
The Earth is largely made up of iron and acts like a giant magnet! The needle of a compass points to the 'magnetic north pole' of the Earth, which is close to where the 'true' north is... but not exactly the same!

DID YOU KNOW?

The first compass was a magnetic needle floating on straw in a bowl of water!

GUESS WHERE?

Below is a map of Europe, Africa and Asia and a list of five places Marco Polo visited. Can you put the letter matching each place in the correct circle on the map?



FUN FACT! Marco was not the first European to travel to China, but he was the first to have a book written about his adventures. His tales were the main source of European knowledge about China in the Middle Ages.



NAME _____

CLASS _____

LET'S PLAY 'MARCO POLO'!

Did you know there is a game named after Marco Polo? It is usually played in water, but it can also be a fun class activity to try out in the playground!



WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- ★ Several players and a teacher or other adult to act as supervisor.
- ★ An area of grass or paved playground, marked off with chalk lines, tape or rope. The area should be at least six metres by six metres. It should be level, with no obstacles for players to bump into!

THE RULES:

1. One player is chosen at random to be 'it'. They must close their eyes – no peeking! It is useful to have a blindfold for this player.
2. The rest of the players have to try and stay away from the player who is 'it'!
3. Whenever the player who is 'it' shouts 'Marco!', all of the other players have to shout 'Polo!' The player who is 'it' has to try and tag another player.
4. If any of the players who are not 'it':
A) are tagged, B) run instead of walking, C) do not say 'Polo!' when the player who is 'it' says 'Marco' or D) steps outside the play area, they become 'it'!
5. The adult who is supervising the group should make sure everyone follows the rules and stays within the boundaries to keep the game safe! A whistle is handy for letting everybody know when somebody is breaking the rules of the game!

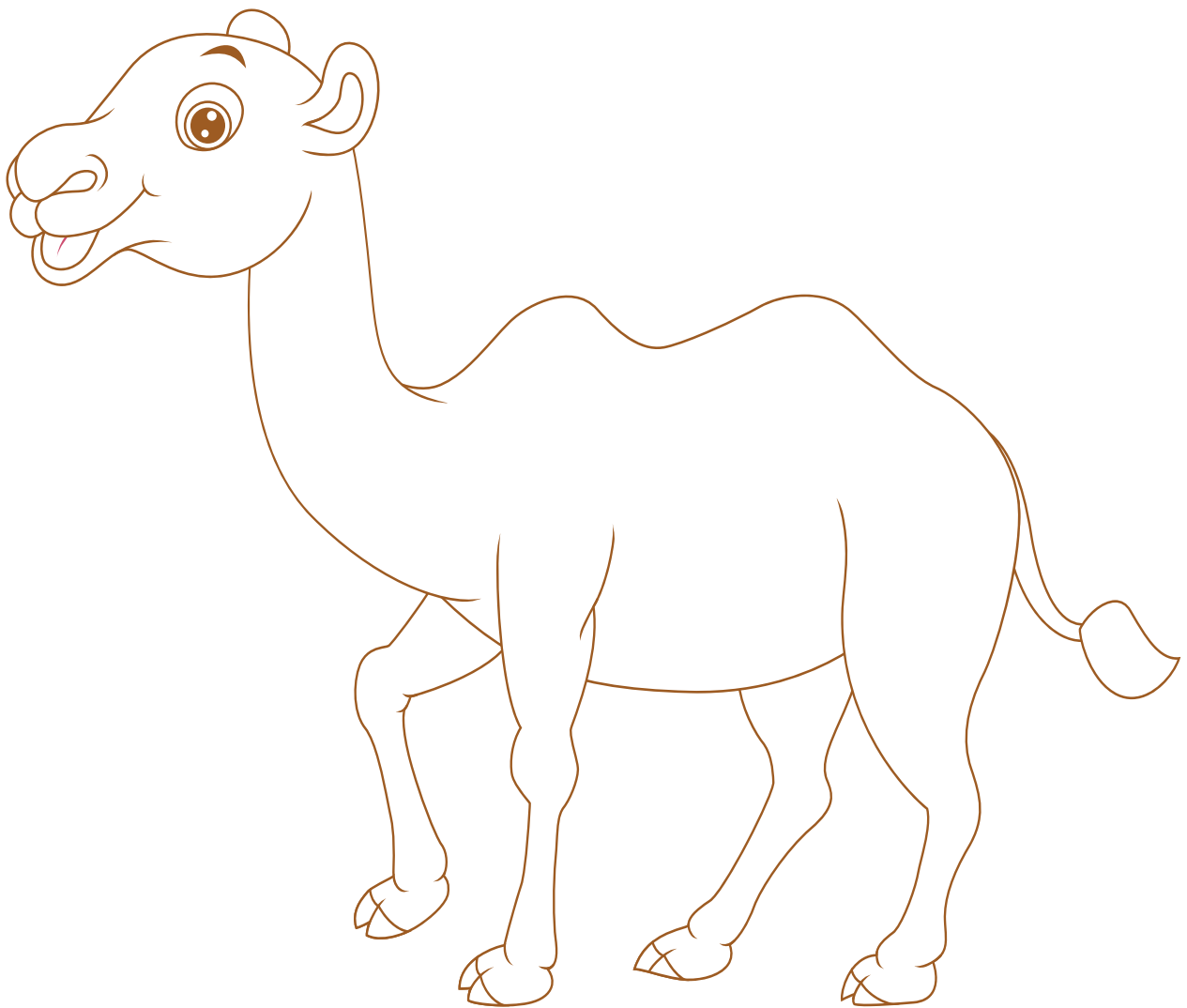


'Water Polo'!

This game is often played in a swimming pool, with everyone in the water! It is challenging because it is harder to run in the water, but the pool makes a natural play area. However it should only be played if everyone can swim and is confident in the water!

COLOUR IN A CAMEL!

Marco Polo rode on camels on his journey across Asia! Use your coloured pens and pencils to brighten up his mount – you can even add extra details like bells, bags and reins to make it extra-fancy!



ONE HUMP OR TWO?

Most people know about 'dromedaries', the one-humped camels that come from the deserts of Arabia. However, there are also two-humped Bactrian camels that live in central Asia! They are bigger than their one-humped cousins and have thick fur to protect them from the cold and snow.

POLO'S PHOTOS!

Imagine if Marco Polo had a mobile phone and took pictures during his journey to share with his friends. Draw pictures in the frames below, matching the captions that Marco has written!

