Trade
Expeditions to Exotic Lands

California Standard 6.2.6: Describe the role of Egyptian trade in the eastern Mediterranean and Nile valley.

California Standard 6.2.8: Identify the location of the Kush civilization and describe its political, commercial, and cultural relations with Egypt.

Purpose: Students will learn who Egypt traded with, how they moved around the region, and what they exported and imported.

Objectives:
- Students will learn vocabulary related to trade.
- Students will read about trade with countries in the eastern Mediterranean and Kush.
- Students will research types of transportation that existed and how it helped Egyptians to come into contact with other culture.
- Students will trace the trade routes used by Egyptians.
- Students will research the kinds of products that were traded in the Eastern Mediterranean and southern countries in Africa.
- Students will create a travel log for an expedition to Kush, Punt, or Nubia. They will describe the voyage including the destination, sailing conditions, the geography of the areas they see, the items imported and exported. The logs need to include illustrations and two weeks worth of entries.

Procedure:
- Day 1: Present vocabulary and make picture flashcards
- Day 2 & 3: Read the Readers’ Theater play “Misa the Merchant.” Practice in groups and perform for each other. (See handout)
- Day 4: Show a short PowerPoint presentation on ancient forms of transportation. Read about different forms of transportation used in ancient days and the products that were trade.
- Day 5: Trace the trade routes used by Egyptians in southern Africa and the eastern Mediterranean on a map.
- Day 6: Begin travel log for trading expedition.

Evaluation:

Students will create a travel log for an expedition to Kush, Punt or Nubia. They will describe the voyage including the destination, sailing conditions, the geography of the areas they see, the items imported and exported. The logs will include illustrations and two weeks worth of entries.
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Misa the Merchant

Narrator 1: Prior to Egypt's New Kingdom period, merchants sailed their ships up and down the Nile River and traded in the villages along its banks. As Egypt grew and developed, trade within the country stayed relatively limited because each section of the country was more or less self-supporting. Foreign trade flourished, however, and helped Egypt become rich and powerful.

Narrator 2: Egypt was rich in many resources because of the fertile soil brought by the annual flooding of the Nile. But Egypt also needed to import building materials and luxury items. Bartering was the means to sell and acquire goods. Join us along the banks of the Nile when King Ramses rules, and Misa will lead us on a tour of the trading business in Ancient Egypt.

Misa: Greetings. May H'apy, the god of the Nile, smile upon us today as we walk along the banks of our beloved river. Ahead is my merchant stall where I sell paper scrolls, ropes, mats, and sandals made from papyrus. My wife minds the goods while I am out trading. I am fortunate to be one of the chosen suppliers to the pharaoh himself. It is the time of collecting taxes for the bountiful harvest we had this season, and the royal scribes are kept quite busy recording the transactions.

Narrator 3: Because there was no use of coins in Egypt until 380 B.C., farmers paid their annual taxes to the pharaoh in honey, grain, oil, leather, flax, and other goods. These were collected by temple officials or the pharaoh's people and used to pay for other goods or services. Sailors, soldiers, priests, scribes, and craftsmen all worked for the pharaoh or for the temples.

Narrator 4: Since the same kinds of objects were usually swapped every day by traders, people had a good idea of what things were worth. Everything had a value that could be stated in weights of copper or silver. The smallest measure was a kite. Ten kites equaled one deben, which was about three ounces. Silver was more valuable than copper, so about ten debens of copper was worth one kite of silver. Goods changed hands, but the metals themselves usually did not.

Misa: How is the trading this morning, my lovely wife?
Misa the Merchant (cont.)

**Marta:** Slow but steady. It is still early, and many boats have not yet arrived. I saw Duru the carpenter trade an unpainted coffin to one of King Ramses scribes for a calf. He must be preparing for his wife’s funeral. She must have been a fine lady, for he has paid bread, ox flesh, wine, sweet oil, olive oil, fat, honey, figs, fish, and vegetables for her funeral items throughout the week.

**Misa:** Aren’t we lucky to have such keen eyes watching over our open-air market? It is as if Horus, the hawk god himself, were perched in our stall.

**Bast:** You may jest, but you are lucky to have such an observant wife. It is important to keep a watchful eye with so many foreign sailors and traders roaming about the docks. The bustle of crowds attracts thieves, and you do not have a faithful baboon trained to bite culprits like so many tradesmen do. Recently, a merchant vessel supposedly laden with grain, glass jars, and fans from the East came ashore. After bartering for our local cattle, fruit, and vegetables, the captain left, and it was discovered that some of his cargo boxes were filled with rocks.

**Chempa:** We have many desired exports and must be diligent in our trading if we are to keep up with supply and demand. You sell our most precious resource, papyrus, which grows only along the banks of the Nile. We also trade items made from flax; building stones from the desert used in making the fine temples; copper and gold from our mines to make tools, jewelry, and cups; semiprecious stones for jewelry and ornaments; and, of course, livestock and agriculture crops. Here comes a Lebanese trader now.

**Iba:** Greetings. Word around the dock is that your stall has the finest sandals. I am in great need of a new pair.

**Misa:** I am honored. My wife will help fit you with what you need. What brings you to our port today?

**Iba:** I am with the ship Byblos Trader, which just returned from Phoenicia. I joined them there and am now overseeing the cargo of cedar from Lebanon to be shaped into strong masts for the pharaoh’s new ships. Although you have lumber here in Egypt adequate for making ship hulls, you must import wood suitable for masts. Ah, these are fine sandals. May they last to walk many a deck. Come with me back to my ship and see the latest design.
Misa the Merchant (cont.)

Misa: Thank you. I will leave negotiations to my capable wife, the shrewd trader in our family.

Narrator 5: The three men follow Iba to his ship and are met by the captain and one of his sailors.

Kempa: I see you found the sandals you were seeking. They seem to be of excellent craftsmanship. Whom do you bring with you, Iba?

Iba: This is Misa and his friends. I was telling them of our new ship.

Kempa: Ah, yes! The pharaoh’s new ships will be of this design. Sabu, take the men below and show them the hull.

Sabu: As you can see, the hull is constructed of planks about three feet long fitted together like bricks and held firmly by long spikes. The seams between the planks are caulked from the inside with papyrus. In heavy seas, the planks are secured by great ropes that prevent them from bending.

Bast: A superior design, to be sure. Shall we join the captain back on the deck?

Sabu: Of course. Watch your step around the barrel of olive oil from Crete. I do not want to think of what the captain would do if it were to spill. It was a difficult journey across the Mediterranean, a voyage I do not wish to repeat soon. As you know, Egypt trades with the Nubians to the south, the Lybians to the west, with Phoenicia and Syria to the East, and with many other exotic places.

Narrator 5: Because the Egyptians believed the pharaoh ruled everywhere that the sun shone, their paintings depicted everything that came from abroad as being a tribute to the god-king. Some Egyptologists interpret this “tribute” as trade goods.

Kempa: Over the years, the king has planned hundreds of expeditions for trading and mining. I have been to the mines of Sinai for copper and turquoise, to Palestine for silver and horses, and down to the Red Sea for ivory, gold, and spices. Still, my favorite journey is down the length of the Nile into Nubia and Kush. There they have the most interesting animals and wares for importation—ivory, ebony, gold, precious stones, ostrich feathers, and monkeys, panthers, and giraffes for the royal zoo.
Misa the Merchant (cont.)

Iba: One of the most famous expeditions was commissioned by Queen Hapshesut to the land of Punt below the southern tip of the Red Sea. Although it happened long before our time, my great-great-grandfather was a sailor and trader who joined some other men who had made the journey. They claimed that the men dismantled their ships and carried them across by donkey to the Red Sea, reassembling them on the coast to sail southeast. I still enjoy visiting the temple near Thebes to admire the pictures of this marvelous adventure.

Narrator 6: Although the actual location of Punt has never been determined, it is thought to have been located in what is now Somaliland. The Egyptians knew it so well that they didn’t think it necessary to locate it for anyone. Fortunately, they did leave us such fascinating information as the type of vessels used, the exports they brought to Punt, the reception they received from the Puntites, and even the words used by the chief of Punt in greeting them. Records show that the Egyptians returned with the imports of myrrh trees, ebony, ivory, gold, cinnamon wood, cosmetics, apes, dogs, and panther skins.

Misa: I’m afraid we must head back to the market. I see more boats and ships arriving, and I have left my wife tending the stall alone for too long. We wish you a pleasant and prosperous stay in our port. Farewell, my new friends.
Misa the Merchant—Vocabulary and Comprehension

Write the following words on the chalkboard for students to copy on index cards for their picture dictionary. Remind them to research and write a complete definition, explanation, or example and draw a picture.

barter exports of Egypt imports of Egypt expeditions market

Use some or all of the following questions for whole-class discussion, small-group work, or individual written assessment. Allow students to refer to Misa the Merchant to answer them.

1. How did the Ancient Egyptians purchase their goods? (The Egyptians used bartering, or trading goods, in order to purchase things. They also purchased goods by using a deben, equal to a weight of copper or silver.)

2. Where did they go to do their shopping? (They shopped at an open-air market, usually located near the docks or entrance to the city.)

3. What is a deben? (A deben is a weight of silver or copper used like money. Ten kite equaled one deben.)

4. Who were some of the Egyptians’ foreign trade partners? (Lebanon, Crete, Greece, Nubia and Kush, Libya, Phoenicia, and Syria)

5. List at least five items imported into Egypt and where they came from. (any five—cedar wood from Lebanon; olive oil from Crete; copper and turquoise from Sinai; silver and horses from Palestine; ivory, gold, and spices from Punt; ivory, ebony, gold, precious stones, ostrich feathers, monkeys, panthers, and giraffes from Nubia and Kush)

6. List at least three of Egypt’s leading exports. (any three—items made from papyrus, items made from flax, building stones, copper, gold, semiprecious stones, crops, and livestock)
Trace the Trade Routes

Use the map below to answer these questions.

1. Name at least five places one could travel for precious metals.
2. Name at least three places one could travel for exotic animals or skins.
3. What spices can be found in Punt?
4. Where could one go for wood supplies?
5. What island would you reach if you sailed north up the Nile and northwest across the Mediterranean Sea?
6. If you started at the Egyptian delta, then traveled east on the Mediterranean Sea, what direction would you need to go to get to the Hittite Empire?
7. Using specific directions, describe one way to get from Egypt to India.
8. Using specific directions, describe one way to get from Egypt to Assyria.
9. Name four places Egyptians could travel to using only waterways.
10. Name three places to which Egyptians would need to travel by land on at least part of their journey.

*Fold up answers before reproducing for students.

Travel Log

Ancient Egyptian ships sailed to many parts of the civilized world. They traveled in all directions to trade for goods they needed. Two famous destinations included expeditions south into the Nubia and Kush region and also to the land of Punt.

Imagine that you have been transported back in time and are aboard one of these Egyptian vessels. Write in the travel log below describing your voyage. Include your destination, the sailing conditions, the geography you see, the items imported and exported for trade, and any other noteworthy events.

**Bonus Work:** Research the many different types of boats used by the Egyptians for trading and traveling. Then, use construction paper to design a model of an authentic Egyptian boat or ship.