

Summer Assignment

Understanding World History in today's world is critical. Our world has shrunk immeasurably and what affects other parts of the world affects the United States. This idea of connectivity feels new and yet it is not. In many ways the world as always been a small place. Cultures, peoples, ideas have always been intertwined. This summer I would like you explore connectivity and innovation in a region of the world we, as westerners, are more unfamiliar with. You will read a book about the extraordinary way the Asian world was flourishing and deeply connected when Europe was in the "Dark Ages"

From Publishers Weekly

*Gordon, a Senior Research Scholar at the University of Michigan, recalls Thomas Cahill's "Hinges of History" series in this accessible history-in-portraits. Covering "the thousand years from 500 to 1500, when Asia was an astonishing, connected, and creative place," Gordon bases each chapter on the actual memoir of someone who lived, worked and traveled there. Each story has its own unique appeal, the most compelling of which is probably Abraham bin Yiju's: a Jewish spice trader living in southwestern India around 1140 CE, his life proves dramatic and transient, and his letters poignant, as in this plea for news of relatives caught up in the Crusades: "No letter... detailing who died and who remained alive, has arrived. By God, write exact details and send your letters with reliable people to soothe my mind." It's a rare joy-and a slight shock-to find such rich evidence of lives lived 1,000 years ago; given the way time erases personal history, however, it makes sense that each man's story feels incomplete. Gordon lacks the vision and distinctive voice of a Cahill, but history buffs will find this book more than worthwhile.*

**Part I:**

**Read:** When Asia Was the World: Traveling Merchants, Scholars, Warriors, and Monks Who Created the "Riches of the East" Paperback – January 6, 2009 by Stewart Gordon (Author)  
Publisher: Da Capo Press; Reprint edition (January 6, 2009)  
Language: English  
ISBN-10: 030681739X  
ISBN-13: 978-0306817397

**Part II:**

**Respond in 1 page:** What part of the book enlightened you the most? Discuss.

**Part III:**

**Respond in a minimum of two pages, maximum of 3 pages to ONE of the following questions.**

1. Discuss the connections between Asia then and now. How might the author's view be helpful to us in the modern world?
2. Choose one of the stories told in the book to expand upon. Using specifics from the book and your research, in what way can you provide a greater context and greater perspective on the period? **Please cite your sources and include a bibliography.**
3. Research the impact of ONE of the cities described in the book and analyze the significance of each place from the book and modern day.

**Be prepared to present your work to the class.** This assignment is due on Monday, September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019.  
Good luck students!! I look forward to seeing you all!