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2020

### Academic ESL World History Unit 3. Venice

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## OER ACADEMIC ESL UNIT 3. ASSIGNMENTS

### **Introduction:**

In the earlier units you followed the shift from nomadic society to agriculture, settlements, development of professions, the evolution of writing and more complex power structures. We saw how writing led to more effective administration and government systems, and legal systems, and we could observe how technology and concentration of power helped to form more organized armies and warfare. The idea of the citizen and civic society took form in Athens. Rome and the Roman Empire demonstrated the impact of military might, technology and control of conquered lands. We also saw the vast impact of trade through the Silk Road and the fascinating journey of goods, ideas, and religious beliefs. This immense evolution of how we as humans organize our societies and the world around us is very much rooted in human interaction with the environment and expansion of human exchange and communication.

In this unit, we will study how a new form of the city as a “city republic”, or a city-state. It emerges as a dominant force of cultural development where merchants, traders and bankers come to dominate and take the lead as a new ruling class. You will also study how new innovations and competition among these new powers drive new geographic explorations, and how the printing press helps a monk from a small town in Germany to cross boundaries in critical thinking and turn the church upside down. Again, we will trace the movements on rivers and waterways and see how mobility and exchange of goods and ideas help form human achievements, but also fierce exploitation of new and foreign cultures and its peoples.

As a first, we will look at the very remarkable city of Venice. Why build a city on water? Who lived there and why did it become such a powerful trading city? To understand Venice, we also need to understand the medieval marketplace, and international trade at the time. What were some of the most attractive goods and where did it come from? Secondly, you will examine the idea of “sources”. Where do the facts come from? How do we arrive at conclusions and facts about the subject matter at hand, and how do we refer to these ideas and cite the sources correctly?

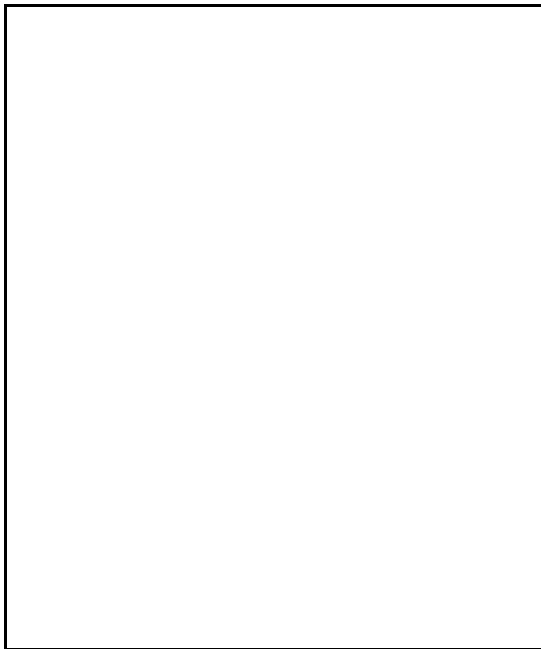
**I. VENICE - A CITY OF TRADE BUILT ON WATER -  
LISTENING AND WRITING EXERCISE**

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNrE6MQNeZQ>

A. **Brainstorming:** What, in your opinion, could be a reason for building a city on water? Share your ideas.

In this case you are simply guessing based on your ideas of how we as humans operate and how maybe also how nature works. You think of probable causes for such an unusual undertaking. In academic language we call this “hypothesizing”, another Greek word that has survived. We build a hypothesis – a statement about an idea or a subject matter and then we try to prove our thinking.

Which language do you use to express probability? Write in the box below.



B. Watch the video. Take notes on a piece of paper as you listen. Stop and repeat as you find it necessary. Organize your notes according to the topics in the chart. What does the video say about these topics? Write in full sentences, do not copy from video.

Topic	What are some important facts about this topic?

2. Go over the questions below. Listen a second time and answer the questions. Answer in full sentences and use your own words as you write.

**4. Listening Comprehension**

- a. How many islands make up the city of Venice?
- b. Why is Venice sinking, according to the video? Explain.
- c. How were the houses built?

- d. Why are the beams not rotting?
- e. The city was founded in 412 C.E. It is protected by a water called “lagoon”. The rest of the area is a swamp. What was the reason for building the city “on water”?
- f. Which other role did the lagoon play in the development of Venice?
- g. What made Venice so powerful?
- h. Which main commodity turned Venice into such an important trading center?

**C. Paragraph writing:**

- 1. Summarize what you know about Venice here. Write at least seven sentences.**
- 2. What do you find the most interesting about Venice? Express your own opinion and use expressions such as:**

In my opinion/ I believe/ I am impressed by/ I wonder why/ I would like to know more about how.../ It is interesting to see how.../ I find it interesting that/

**II. THE CONSTRUCTION OF VENICE: READING, GRAMMAR AND LISTENING**

A. Watch this video before you do the reading exercise:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXptcteCegg&t=897s>

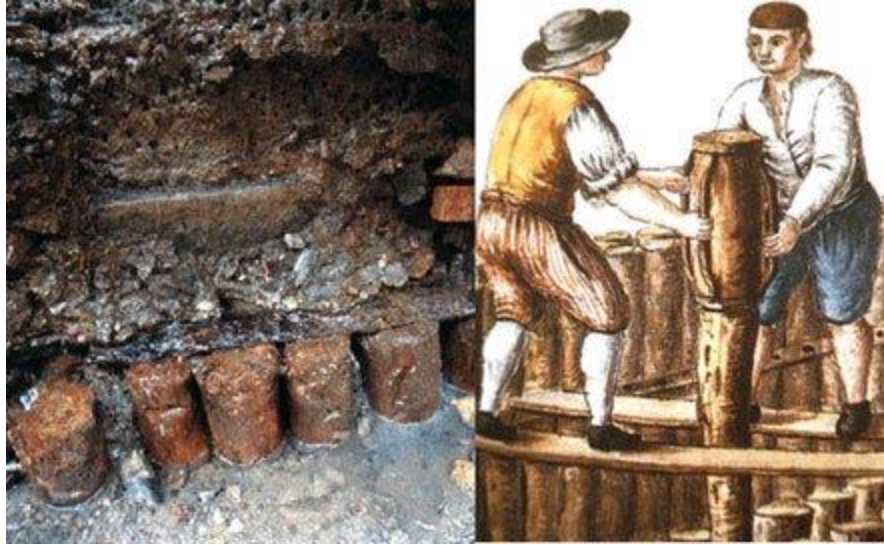
**B. Go over the text and write down the highlighted phrases on separate sheet.**

Source: *Ancient Origins, Reconstructing the Story of Humanity's Past*.

<http://www.ancient-origins.net/ancient-places-europe/construction-venice-floating-city-001750?nopaging=1>

Venice, Italy, **is known by** (1) several names, one of which is the 'Floating City'. This is because the city of Venice consists of 118 small islands **connected by numerous canals** (2) and bridges. Yet, the buildings in Venice **were not built** (3) directly on the islands. Instead, they were built upon wooden platforms that **were supported by wooden stakes** (4) driven into the ground.

The story of Venice begins in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, barbarians from the north were raiding Rome's former territories. To escape these raids, the Venetian population on the mainland escaped to the nearby marshes, and found refuge on the sandy islands of Torcello, Iesolo and Malamocco. Although the settlements were initially temporary in nature, the Venetians gradually inhabited the islands on a permanent basis. To have their buildings on a solid foundation, the Venetians first drove wooden stakes into the sandy ground. Then, wooden platforms **were constructed** (5) on top of these stakes. Finally, the buildings **were constructed** (6) on these platforms. A 17<sup>th</sup> century book which explains in detail the construction procedure in Venice demonstrates the amount of wood required just for the stakes. According to this book, when the Santa Maria Della Salute church was built, 1,106,657 wooden stakes, each measuring 4 meters, **were driven underwater**. (7) This process took two years and two months to be completed. On top of that, the wood had to be obtained from the forests of Slovenia, Croatia and Montenegro, and transported to Venice via water. Thus, one can imagine the scale of this undertaking.



*The city of Venice was built on wooden foundations.*

The use of wood as a supporting structure may seem like a surprise, since wood is relatively less durable than stone or metal. The secret to the longevity of Venice's wooden foundation is the fact that they are submerged underwater. **The decay of wood is caused by microorganisms**, (8) such as fungi and bacteria. **As the wooden support in Venice is submerged underwater, (9) they are not exposed to oxygen, (10)** one of the elements needed by microorganisms to survive. In addition, the constant flow of salt water around and through the wood petrifies the wood over time, turning the wood into a hardened stone-like structure

As a city surrounded by water, Venice had a distinct advantage over her land-based neighbors. For a start, Venice was secure from enemy invasions. For instance, Pepin, the son of Charlemagne, attempted to invade Venice, but failed as he was unable to reach the islands on **which the city was built**.(11) Venice eventually became a great maritime power in the Mediterranean. For instance, in 1204, Venice allied itself with the Crusaders and succeeded in capturing the Byzantine capital, Constantinople. Nevertheless, Venice started to decline in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and was eventually captured by Napoleon in 1797 when he invaded Italy.



### **III. READING AND LISTENING: THE MARKETPLACE: TRADE IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE. RESEARCH AND PROBABILITY.**

**Source:** <https://www.ancient.eu/article/1301/trade-in-medieval-europe/>

**Focus:** Introduction, Market and Shops, expansion of International Trade

#### **INTRODUCTION: The “Shaky” Grounds of Research**

One interesting aspect of research is that what we know keeps changing. Something that was true thirty years ago, may have become obsolete. Obsolete means that a fact is outdated and no longer valid. Naturally, some things never or rarely change. For example, a human bone will most likely be put together the same way for thousands of years to come, what may change is that we understand it better. In this case, we add knowledge to what we already know, but the existing facts about the bone remain. Some areas of research are different. Think of Pompeii. There you could see that what we know about this town and the daily lives of the Romans is fairly recent information and depending on what the archaeologists find, the facts may tell a new and different story and not only revise but even disprove what we thought was true before. Ideas and perspectives change, and this makes up a big part of academic writing and research activities. We will get back to that when you write your next essay.

Another important aspect involved in fact finding is probability. When you wake up in the morning and look outside, you often draw conclusions about what you think the weather is going to be. You say: “I think it’s going to rain.” rather than “It’s going to rain”. You cannot be entirely sure. The same happens in research. In Pompeii, the scientists made predictions about what and where to find their artefacts. They could not be entirely sure about what they would find. In this reading, you will find examples of probability and hypotheses about what historians believe happened during the time after the Romans. There are different ideas and in fact, the researchers do not agree. This is the shaky ground research sometimes stands on.

Here is some important language and grammar you use when you assume, predict, or infer facts. You will work more on the grammar in the *Grammar Skills* section and practice the use of modal verbs in other assignments.

#### **Important Expressions:**

Probably  
 I assume  
 I believe  
 It is possible,  
 Perhaps  
 It may be  
 It may have been  
 It's likely that  
 It's unlikely that

**a. Important Vocabulary: Explain the meaning in full sentences. Do not copy from dictionary**

<b>Vocabulary/Expression</b>	<b>Explain</b>
Surplus, deficit	
To some degree	
To be disputed	
History, historic, historian	
To emerge	
To specialize in	
To be evidenced by	
To be encompassed	
decomposition	
To be constructed	
To be destroyed	
To be protected by	
Refugee, refuge	

**b. Introduction - Market and Shops - Scanning for Facts**

**Read AND listen to the introduction and the section of *Market and Shops*. Go over the text again and scan the text for information about the topics listed in the chart. Fill in the information.**

Topic	Information
Small communities/local markets	
Licenses and fees	
Improved transportation and banking	
Luxury goods	
Pirates	
Shops	

**C. *Expansion of International Trade*: What if we are not certain about the facts.**

**Paragraph I and II**

Skim through paragraph I. Underline expressions that indicate probability and likelihood. Write them down.

**Summarize:** Use the expressions above to summarize the uncertainties that surround the knowledge about international trade, according to the text.

**Paragraph II.** Search the text to answer the following questions:

1. How do we know the trade routes in the Mediterranean?  
Which goods were traded?  
Who participated in the trade?

**IV. Reflective Journal**

Global Trading today: What are we trading? Based on your knowledge and experience, what does our global society have in common with the medieval market? Which changes have taken place? Which parts of the world are in control of trade, goods, and resources?