

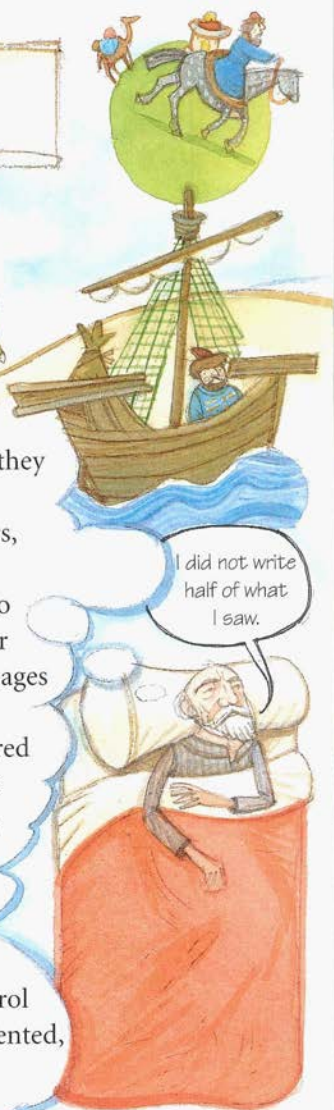
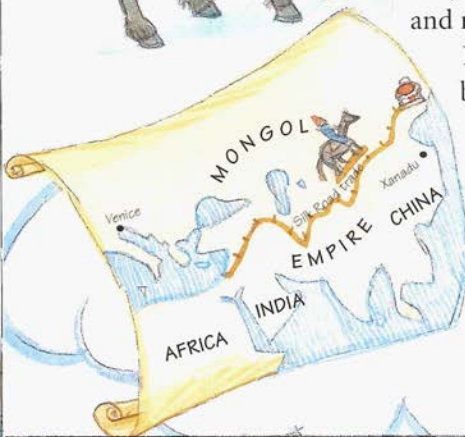


# c1254 Marco Polo 1324

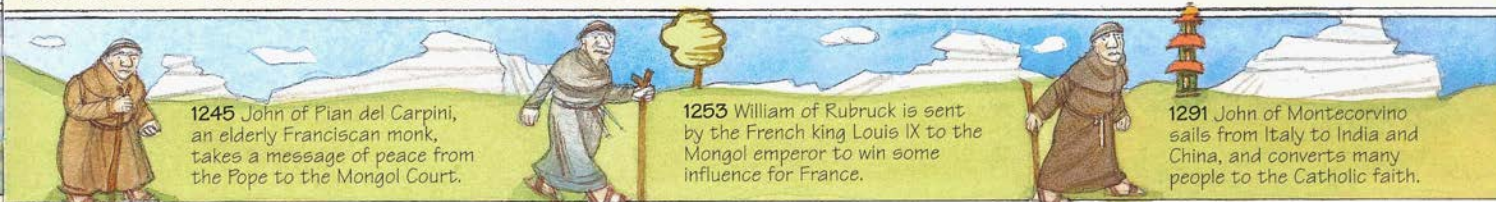


Marco Polo's father and uncle were the first Europeans ever to cross the Asian continent to Cathay (China). By the time they set out on their next adventure, in 1271, Marco Polo was old enough to accompany them. The men journeyed for three years, until they reached the magnificent summer palace of Xanadu. The great Kublai Khan was there to welcome them, and took Marco Polo into his service at once. Marco travelled the Mongol Empire for nearly twenty years as the emperor's diplomat. He learnt four languages and much about Chinese customs.

Not long after Marco returned home to Venice, he was captured by the city's rivals, the Genoese. He used his time in prison to make a record of his amazing journey. *The Book of Marvels* is a description of China's wonders: the postal system, good roads, hot water on tap, paper money, even a burning black stone – coal. But some people thought Marco Polo was telling stories. They found it difficult to believe in dog-headed men and magicians who could control the weather. On his deathbed, the old explorer only commented, "I did not write half of what I saw."



## POLO'S VIVID DESCRIPTIONS OF CHINA FIRED THE IMAGINATION OF EUROPEAN TRADERS.



1245 John of Pian del Carpini, an elderly Franciscan monk, takes a message of peace from the Pope to the Mongol Court.

1253 William of Rubruck is sent by the French king Louis IX to the Mongol emperor to win some influence for France.

1291 John of Montecorvino sails from Italy to India and China, and converts many people to the Catholic faith.

All the monks hoped to find Prester John, who was believed to be a Christian ruler in the East and therefore a powerful ally. Sadly, he did not exist.