

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# The Tea Horse Road

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

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## The Bronze Age Collapse

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More than 3,000 years ago, Western Asia and the Mediterranean were home to many of the world's great Bronze Age civilizations. These societies, which included the Egyptian, Babylonian, and Minoan empires, among others, flourished through the production and trade of metal tools, spices, and textiles. The era was also characterized by significant cultural and technological progress, such as the creation of writing systems and the invention of the wheel. But by the early 12th century BCE, many Bronze Age empires were on the brink of total collapse. What could have caused these wealthy, powerful civilizations to fall so dramatically?

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To this day, historians and scientists continue to debate the events that may have led to the Bronze Age collapse. Several popular theories have to do with natural disasters. A well-documented drought resulted in widespread crop failure, compounded by a severe volcanic eruption that triggered a period of global cooling. Some civilizations may have come under attack from outsiders. One hypothesis suggests that coastal settlements were plundered and destroyed by a group known collectively as the Sea Peoples. As cities fell, industry and trade may have also suffered, leaving many without access to important resources.

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Notes

## Gift Economies

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Whether you want to see a movie, get a haircut, or enjoy a meal at your favorite restaurant, you'll likely be expected to pay for the service. But not every economic system relies on a medium of exchange like money. In a gift economy, goods and services are exchanged without the expectation of immediate or future repayment. Instead, emphasis is generally placed on the social rewards of giving, such as honor and loyalty from recipients. Societies governed by a gift economy are often highly interdependent, with members implicitly relying on one another to ensure that nobody goes without.

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To commemorate important events such as births, deaths, and weddings, some Indigenous groups in the Pacific Northwest hold potlatch ceremonies. During a potlatch, a leader gives away valuables in order to gain status and reinforce community relations. Today, common potlatch gifts include jewelry, textiles, and shelf-stable foods. In the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea, the Kula ring is a complex exchange system that spans 18 islands. Participants sail hundreds of miles to gift shell necklaces and armbands to those of lower status, demonstrating social and political authority. Cultures around the world, from New Zealand to Indonesia to Thailand, practice similar rituals.

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**Moai**

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Between the years 1100 and 1600, the Rapa Nui people of Easter Island created nearly a thousand enormous stone figures. These statues, known as moai, are said to represent the faces of important ancestors, chiefs, and other high-ranking community members. Considered an intermediary between humans and gods, moai were traditionally placed on ceremonial pedestals called ahu, symbolizing their connection to both the earth and the heavens.

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Without the use of modern technology, the production and transportation of the moai was a particularly impressive achievement. The vast majority were carved from compressed volcanic ash sourced from a single crater. Sculptors would outline the moai in the rock wall, then slowly chip away at it to reveal a human figure. Upon completion, some were placed in a permanent location along the island's coast. With the average moai weighing 14 tons and standing nearly as many feet high, this was no easy feat. Recent findings suggest that the Rapa Nui may have harnessed the moai with ropes to pull them across the island. This process, which has been successfully simulated by researchers, likely required the strength of dozens of people. Only about a third of these statues ever made it to their destination, with the remainder still in transit or in the quarry.

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