

Name _____

Date _____

Literal and Implied Meanings

Definition

Literal meaning is the exact, dictionary definition of words.

Implied meaning suggests ideas not directly stated but inferred from context, tone, or word choice.

Example

Type	Example	Interpretation
Literal	"The temperature outside is freezing ."	The actual temperature is at or below 32°F/0°C
Implied	"The teacher's response was freezing ."	The teacher's manner was cold or unfriendly

PART 1: Identify the Meaning

Read each sentence about the Silk Road. Circle "L" if the underlined portion shows literal meaning or "I" if it shows implied meaning.

1. Marco Polo traveled along the Silk Road with his father and uncle, crossing burning deserts and freezing mountain passes. (L I)

2. Chinese silk was worth its weight in gold in Roman markets along the Mediterranean. (L I)

3. The Silk Road stretched for over 4,000 miles from China to the Mediterranean Sea. (L I)

Name _____

Date _____

Literal and Implied Meanings

4. When Emperor Wu sent Zhang Qian west to establish trade routes, he faced an uphill battle convincing local rulers to cooperate. (L I)

5. Merchants often transported their goods in camel caravans that could travel long distances without much water.

(L I)

PART 2: Multiple Choice

Choose the best explanation of the implied meaning in each sentence.

1. "The knowledge that flowed along the Silk Road transformed civilizations."

- a) Books physically moved from one place to another
- b) Ideas and information were exchanged between cultures
- c) Water irrigation systems were built along trade routes
- d) Knowledge was a physical object being transported

2. "Chang'an was the gateway to the east for foreign merchants."

- a) The city had a literal gate facing eastward
- b) The city served as an important point of access for trade
- c) All merchants had to pass through a specific entrance
- d) Chang'an manufactured gateways for other cities

3. "Buddhist teachings silk-roaded their way from India into China."

- a) Buddhist texts were wrapped in silk
- b) Buddhism spread gradually along trade routes
- c) Buddhist monks wore silk robes
- d) Silk traders were all Buddhists

Name _____

Date _____

Literal and Implied Meanings

4. Pepper from India was a hot commodity in Roman markets.

- a) The pepper was served at high temperatures
- b) The pepper was spicy in flavor
- c) The pepper was highly valued and in demand
- d) Roman markets were uncomfortably warm

5. After visiting China, foreign envoys carried the seeds of new ideas back home.

- a) They smuggled actual plant seeds out of China
- b) They brought Chinese agricultural techniques to their homelands
- c) They took back concepts and knowledge to share with their people
- d) They planted Chinese crops in their home countries

PART 3: Match the Meanings

For each phrase below, write the letter for its literal meaning and the number for its implied meaning.

1. The Silk Road **wove** cultures together.

Literal meaning: _____

Implied meaning: _____

- A. To combine threads into fabric
- B. A network connecting different places
- C. To physically create textiles
- D. To create connections between civilizations

2. Merchants had to **navigate** difficult terrain.

Literal meaning: _____

Implied meaning: _____

- A. To find one's way through physical landscape
- B. To sail a ship using maps and instruments
- C. To physically move through challenging landscapes
- D. To carefully handle complex situations

Name _____

Date _____

Literal and Implied Meanings

3. Tang Dynasty China opened its **doors** to foreign influence.

Literal meaning: _____

Implied meaning: _____

- A. Physical doors were unlocked
- B. To provide actual entry through gateways
- C. To become more accepting of outside ideas
- D. To physically allow foreigners inside buildings

4. Traders **threaded** their way through mountain passes.

Literal meaning: _____

Implied meaning: _____

- A. To pass an actual thread through something
- B. To move carefully along a narrow path
- C. To sew fabric while traveling
- D. To carefully navigate challenging pathways

5. Some officials **turned a blind eye** to smuggling.

Literal meaning: _____

Implied meaning: _____

- A. To physically rotate an eye that cannot see
- B. To look away from something
- C. To choose not to see or acknowledge something
- D. To have a medical condition affecting vision

Name _____

Date _____

Literal and Implied Meanings

PART 4: Complete the Sentences

Fill in the blank with an appropriate word or phrase that creates either a literal or implied meaning as indicated in parentheses.

1. Chinese merchants _____ their silk carefully before the long journey west. (literal - describe physical handling)
2. The exchange of goods along the Silk Road _____ the economies of countries involved. (implied - show positive impact)
3. Caravansaries provided _____ for weary travelers along the route. (literal - describe actual service)
4. Ideas from Greece and Rome _____ eastward along the trade routes. (implied - show movement of concepts)
5. Merchants had to _____ heavy taxes at various checkpoints along the Silk Road. (literal - describe actual payment)

Name _____

Date _____

Literal and Implied Meanings – Answer Key

PART 1: Identify the Meaning

1. L (These were actually extremely hot deserts)
2. I (Expresses high value, not literal equal weight)
3. L (Actual measured distance)
4. I (Metaphor for difficulty, not a literal hill)
5. L (Actual animal caravans)

PART 2: Multiple Choice

1. b) Ideas and information were exchanged between cultures
2. b) The city served as an important point of access for trade
3. b) Buddhism spread gradually along trade routes
4. c) The pepper was highly valued and in demand
5. c) They took back concepts and knowledge to share with their people

PART 3: Match the Meanings

1. A, 2 (The Silk Road wove cultures together)
2. C, 4 (Merchants had to navigate difficult terrain)
3. E, 5 (Tang Dynasty China opened its doors to foreign influence)
4. H, 8 (Traders threaded their way through mountain passes)
5. J, 9 (Some Chinese officials turned a blind eye to smuggling)

PART 4: Complete the Sentences

Possible answers (other reasonable answers may be acceptable):

1. packed/wrapped/folded (literal)
2. strengthened/transformed/enriched (implied)
3. shelter/food/lodging (literal)
4. flowed/traveled/journeyed (implied)
5. pay/hand over/deliver (literal)