**Brian Ely and Ti Donaldson**

**Senior Group Website**

**Process Paper**

One of the first topics that came to mind for this year’s theme was the Silk Road. Not only did the Silk Road fit well into each of the three categories, but it was also a turning point for intercontinental trade. However, we realized that the Silk Road was likely to be a common topic, one that many contesters would probably use. Before committing ourselves to one topic though, we considered alternatives, one being space exploration. We wanted to look deeper into the Mars projects of the past, and what plans we have for future Mars exploration. The problem however, was that Mars exploration has been relatively recent on the historical timeline, hardly older than fifty years. Therefore, we ultimately decided to commit to the Silk Road, as it was a large enough topic that we felt we could delve specifically into a subtopic, somewhat differentiating us from other Silk Road projects.

After committing to our topic, we immediately began to conduct our research. The first thing we wanted to find was just a general timeline regarding the development, maintenance, and decline of the Silk Road; basically a crash course that would give us general information. We were successful in finding several such sources, so we then moved on to sources pertaining to specific events, people, or civilizations that interacted along the Silk Road. We found a large amount of information regarding classical China, and as such, decided to focus most of my information on that. Then, we collected primary sources including paintings, murals, photographs, and quotations from ancient manuscripts and records. Although we eventually collected more primary sources than secondary, we made sure to collect enough modern information from authors, professors, and other experts in the Silk Road field.

We decided to create a website even before conducting research, as one of us had done an NHD project twice before and the website had proved to be the most efficient and versatile. As we conducted our research it became even clearer that a website was the right choice, as it could efficiently and neatly organize and present the many images and primary sources required for our topic. As for creating the actual website, we first identified a shell, consisting of a homepage, and the E, S, and P categories. Later we expanded it to include a resource page (as is customary) and an Early Causes page describing what led up to the Silk Road. After identifying the pages, we simply filled in each sub topic with relevant information and primary sources, then tweaked it artistically and made it as aesthetically pleasing as possible.

Our project relates to the NHD theme in several ways, one of the most prominent being the Exchange category. The Silk Road revolutionized exchange, enabling previously isolated civilizations to trade with one another. In addition, the Silk Road led to explorations of new lands societies that had never been charted before. The encounters resulting thereof made the Silk Road a turning point for this year’s theme.