Life Along a Trade Route

**Purpose:** To learn about life in a trade center on the Arabian peninsula during the early Islamic period

If you were a merchant in Arabia in the 600s, you probably often visited important trade centers such as Medina, Mecca, and Aden. In fact, most people who wished to trade came to these trading cities. Nomads, farmers, craftspeople, and merchants came to the city.

There they traded goods in a central marketplace. These products included food, livestock, textiles, leather goods, spices, and metals from Arabia and also Europe, Africa, and other parts of Asia. As shown below, many different activities took place in the markets of the trade centers.

A **Textiles**  A variety of cloth products, including cotton from India and silk from China, were available at fabric stalls.

B **Accommodations**  Sleeping quarters for merchants were usually found on the second level above the stalls.

C **Market Inspectors**  In some markets, a market inspector observed the trading. The inspector’s job was to make sure that merchants dealt fairly with each other and their customers. This position became official in the 700s.

D **Livestock**  The trading of livestock, including sheep and horses, was usually done near the marketplace. Traders also sold camels to be used for transportation.

**California Standards**

7.2.5 Describe the growth of cities and the establishment of trade routes among Asia, Africa, and Europe, the products and inventions that traveled along these routes (e.g., spices, textiles, paper, steel, new crops), and the role of merchants in Arab society.
1. TALK ABOUT IT  What types of activities are taking place in this trading center? Which people are involved in the activities?

2. WRITE ABOUT IT  Choose one of the activities shown and explain why the activity is important. (Writing 2.1)