

In this task, you will listen to an academic talk. You will then read four questions and choose the correct answer.

Talk 1: History

What is the main topic of the talk?

- The history of Chinese silk production
- The role of the Mongol Empire in Asian trade
- A network of ancient trade routes and their broader effects
- The economic relationship between China and medieval Europe

Why does the speaker mention Buddhism and Islam?

- To argue that religious exchange was more significant than commercial exchange
- To explain why merchants traveled the Silk Road
- To illustrate that the Silk Road transmitted more than goods
- To describe the religious beliefs of Central Asian traders

According to the speaker, what contributed to the decline of the Silk Road?

- The development of faster sea routes
- The rise of the Mongol Empire
- A decrease in demand for Chinese silk
- Political conflict between China and Europe

What can be inferred about the Black Death?

- Trade networks can spread disease as well as goods.
- It originated in Europe and spread eastward.
- It spread more quickly than any previous epidemic.
- It significantly reduced the demand for silk in Europe.

Talk 2: Economics

What is the main topic of the talk?

- How AI-driven job displacement differs from past industrial automation
- Why economists disagree about the long-term effects of automation
- Why AI will eventually create more jobs than it eliminates
- The role of government policy in managing technological change

Why does the speaker mention writing, analysis, and legal reasoning?

- To show that some professions are more difficult to automate than others
- To explain why educated workers are better prepared for disruption
- To compare the difficulty of cognitive work with manual labor
- To illustrate that AI is affecting skilled, educated workers, not just manual ones

According to the speaker, how did industrial transformation differ from AI in terms of pace?

- Industrial change happened faster but affected fewer workers.
- Industrial change was gradual because governments regulated it carefully.
- Industrial change unfolded over generations, while AI is advancing in years.
- The effects of AI are more predictable than the effects of the Industrial Revolution were.

What does the speaker imply about the people most at risk from AI displacement?

- Workers who lack the political influence to shape AI policy
- Workers in industries that have already been heavily automated
- Educated workers who assumed their skills would keep them secure
- Young workers who entered the workforce after AI became widespread

Talk 1: The Silk Road

Listen to a talk in a world history class.

The Silk Road was not a single road but a vast network of trade routes connecting China, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. It operated for roughly 1,500 years and took its name from Chinese silk — one of the most valuable commodities traded along its routes.

Merchants rarely traveled the entire length. Instead, goods passed through a series of middlemen, changing hands many times. But trade was never purely commercial. Ideas and religions traveled alongside the goods. Buddhism spread from India into Central Asia and China along these routes, and Islam spread in a similar way. The Black Death, which killed an estimated one-third of Europe's population in the 14th century, also traveled westward along these routes.

The decline of the Silk Road came gradually. Advances in maritime navigation made sea routes faster and cheaper. The fall of the Mongol Empire disrupted overland trade. By the late 15th century, European powers had established direct sea routes to Asia, and the Silk Road was largely abandoned.

Talk 2: AI and the Job Market

Listen to a talk in an economics class.

The Industrial Revolution is often cited as a historical parallel to today's AI-driven changes in the workforce. When machines replaced manual labor in the 18th and 19th centuries, many jobs disappeared — but new ones emerged, and employment levels eventually recovered. Some economists argue the same pattern will repeat with AI.

But there are reasons to think this time is different. The Industrial Revolution primarily displaced physical labor. AI is displacing cognitive work — the kind of tasks that previously required education and training. Writing, analysis, diagnosis, and legal reasoning are all being affected. This means the disruption is hitting a much broader range of workers, including many who were told that education would protect them.

The speed of change is also a factor. Industrial transformation unfolded over generations, giving societies time to adapt through new schools, new industries, and new social safety nets. AI capabilities are advancing in years, not decades, leaving far less time for those adjustments.

Whether history repeats itself depends on choices societies make now — about education, policy, and who bears the cost of transition.

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