

**MARCO POLO**  
By Carole L. Cooney

This play is based on some of the items Marco Polo found during his explorations. Marco started exploring with his father when he was 14 years old. A few years later, he, his father and his uncle traveled to many different places on their journey to Asia. There they found many unusual things. When he returned, no one believed his stories.

**Setting:** An outdoor market and a restaurant, The Jade Palace, in Asia

**Characters:**

Narrator

Marco Polo

Nicolo Polo, Marco's father

Maffeo Polo, Nicolo's brother

**Narrator:** Marco Polo, his father, Nicolo Polo and Maffeo, his uncle, traveled for three and a half years to reach China. While they were exploring, they discovered many unusual things. In this scene, we find them at a large outdoor market.

**Marco:** Papa! Papa! Come quick. I want you to see this thing!

**Nicolo:** Marco, we haven't time to stop. We must meet Uncle Maffeo at the restaurant.

**Marco:** Pleeeze, Papa. It will only take a little minute.

**Nicolo:** All right. What is it you're so excited about?

**Marco:** (He turns his back to his father, reaches in his pocket and pulls out a pair of eye glasses and puts them on, then swiftly turns around facing his father. He smiles broadly)

**Nicolo:** Marco! What on earth is that *thing* on your nose?

**Marco:** Papa. It is called eye glasses. Here, Papa. Try them on.

**Nicolo:** (Putting the eye glasses on.) Oh! (Blinking) They hurt my eyes. They make everything blurry. Ah! Marco, throw them away.

**Marco:** Oh, Papa. Pleeeze let me keep them. It's a new invention to help people see. Look. Papa. See over there. There are people wearing eye glasses.

**Narrator:** Just then, Maffeo walks toward Marco and Nicolo carrying two sacks.

**Nicolo:** Maffeo, what did you buy?

**Maffeo:** I have in these sacks the most fragrant and delicious spices in the world. This is called cinnamon (lifting up one sack) and this is ginger (lifting up the other sack).

**Marco:** May I smell their fragrance?

**Maffeo:** (Marco and Nicolo open the sacks and smell the spices.) What do you think?

**Marco:** I think they're delicious smelling. Can we eat some food prepared with these spices, Papa?

**Nicolo:** Of course, Marco. Let's go to The Jade Palace, that little restaurant across the plaza. I've heard that the food is the best in the town.

**Narrator:** Marco, his father and uncle walk across the plaza to the restaurant. They carefully read the menu but have difficulty understanding the Chinese letters.

**Maffeo:** Let's ask the waiter to help us order our food. Waiter! Waiter!

**Waiter:** Yes, sir. How can I help you?

**Nicolo:** We don't know how to order our food. Would you bring us what you think is the best food in your restaurant?

**Waiter:** Yes, sir. (He walks into the kitchen and orders the Chef's specialty dishes.)

**Marco:** (Looking around the restaurant) Uncle Maffeo, what do you think those long wiggly things are? I wonder what they are called.

**Narrator:** The waiter carries a large tray. There are bowls of steaming noodles in a clear broth with pieces of shrimp, chicken and pork floating on top. He serves the noodle dish into the bowls and places them before Marco, his father and his uncle.

**Waiter:** (bowing low) Please enjoy!

**Narrator:** Marco, his father and uncle, look around to see how the other people are eating this food. Marco finally picks up the chop sticks and spears a piece of shrimp. The waiter rushes to them and shows them how to use the chop sticks. They have a very difficult time eating with the chop sticks.

**Marco:** I can't do this! Can't we just pick up this food with our fingers? What is this called anyway?

**Waiter:** Sir, it is called noodles.

**Nicolo:** We'll call it "pasta" and bring some pasta back to Italy, cook it and eat it with a fork and spoon. For now, Marco, just do the best you can.

**Narrator:** Marco, his father and uncle did their best to eat the noodles but it wasn't easy. When they brought pasta back to Italy, it has been said that this was the first time Italians had ever seen or eaten pasta. Well, that may be true. However, it is also said that Italians were eating pasta before Marco was born. So, you decide.