

AP World History

Summer Assignment: 2019-20

An Edible History of Humanity by Tom Standage

The book you have been assigned to read is one that provides an excellent, thought-provoking look at world history through the food we eat. The foods we eat are something most people take for granted. As we will see in this reading and throughout this class, everything from what we eat to the clothes we wear to the technology we use to the religion we practice; everything has an interrelated history. The social studies department has books that can be checked out for the summer or it might be preferable to have your own copy to underline or highlight. You may check your local library to find a copy as well.

Instructions

You are to read the book and take notes for each part. The big questions are to give you purpose for reading, and you may want to answer these as you proceed through the book. In addition, you may want to create either chapter or sections summaries to synthesize the information you have read. Any work MUST be HANDWRITTEN to be used in class the first week of school. (Absolutely NO typed assignments will be allowed.)

You will have a reading quiz within the first few days of school and a writing assignment or Socratic Seminar based on the book's main arguments.

NOTE: Several of the following questions apply to multiple chapters or concern the book overall. It is expected that your answers will be well developed and include specific evidence from the text.

Big Picture Questions:

1. How has food served as a catalyst for change over time throughout human history?
2. Does the author's claim of the importance of food in history seem over-exaggerated? Why or why not?
3. What explains the shift from a hunter-gatherer to an agricultural society? Evaluate the author's statement that this was the "worst mistake in human history." Is this a legitimate statement?
4. Explain how wealth and poverty seemed inevitable consequences of agriculture and civilization.
5. How did Asian nations use spices to exploit the Roman Empire? To what extent did Asian power over Europe continue after the collapse of the Roman Empire?
6. Why does the author state that "the pursuit of spices is the third way in which food remade the world?"
7. What role has religion played in global interaction and trade throughout our history? Be sure to include interactions between Christian and Muslim empires in your discussion. Does religion influence global interactions today? Why or Why not?
8. What does the author mean when he says "Colonialism, Commerce, and Science go hand in hand?" Discuss the IMPACT of this interaction on world civilizations. (Europe, Africa, Asian nations, the Americas, etc).
9. Would you argue that the potato was a blessing or a curse to European history? Use evidence from the text to defend your answer.
10. Why was food the "fuel of war?" How could food be used both offensively (as a weapon) and defensively? How did world leaders utilize this concept?
11. Has the process of "canning food" been a positive or negative development?
12. How do you explain the statement that "famine has never struck a nation with both a free press and a representative democracy?" Is this argument valid?
13. Evaluate the actions of Mao Zedong and Joseph Stalin in their respective countries. What was the "Great Leap Forward?" How did these leaders bring about the decline of their own nations?
14. What are the benefits and problems of the Green Revolution? How has this movement impacted modern society?
15. What do you think of Standage's approach to history? Is this a useful way to think about history? What other approaches might one take?