

Lesson 1
The Global Economy, A Study in Products:
Introductory Mapping Activity

Preparation

Have you ever stopped to think how the shirt you are wearing or the candy bar you are eating got to you? Sure, you bought it at the store, but where did it come from before it reached you? Do you know how many people from different places around the world were involved in making the product you are enjoying?

Introduction

These are questions that historians have been asking about products for a long time. Our world has been economically connected for several centuries through a process we call globalization. You may have heard of this term. Globalization is the process by which peoples around the world have become increasingly interconnected through rapid communication and transport. Globalization involves the intensification of economic, social, cultural, political, and biological interchange worldwide, resulting on the one hand in a general acceleration of change and on the other in efforts to strengthen the bonds of identity and community on the local and regional levels. In this series of lessons you will learn how our entire world became economically interconnected for the first time beginning approximately 1500 CE. Although interregional trade across Afroeurasia had been going on for centuries, the Columbian Exchange and the opening of passages across the Atlantic and Pacific began to shape a truly globalized economy.

Thanks to advances in maritime technology and the increased volume of trade that followed these developments, people from both sides of the Atlantic became exposed not only to different peoples and ideas but also to different products that facilitated a new desire for buying and selling, or producing and consuming. These lessons will introduce you to a few of the many products that illustrate the global nature of this new economy. You will meet the people who made or cultivated the product (the producers), the people who got the product to the people who wanted it (the movers), and finally the people who wanted and received the product (the consumers). In the unit assessment, you will investigate the question of who really controlled the global economy by 1800. Did a particular country or people dominate the trade of all of these products in 1800?

In this first lesson, you will be introduced to the three products that you will follow in this teaching unit. Your job will be to read primary and secondary source excerpts and figure out where the products were first developed or cultivated and label them on the map.

Activities

1. Student Handout 1.1 provides the maps students will use throughout the lessons to label where each product originates, moves, and is consumed. Students have two choices of maps, one centered on the Pacific Ocean and one on the Atlantic Ocean. They will need to use an atlas to locate particular countries and to draw them on the map to label the precise origin of the product. They will also need to create a legend, or key, for their map so they can easily distinguish one product from another. They should use a different symbol for each product, and they can create that symbol. Make sure they write their legend on the lower left-hand corner of Student Handout 1.1.

2. Using Student Handout 1.2, have students read about the origins of the fur trade in North America. They should label on the map where the purchase of beaver furs took place. They may choose their symbol for Fur, perhaps the letter “F” or a picture of the animal whose fur was used to make products from fur pelts. Whatever they choose, this will be their symbol for fur throughout the whole unit.

3. Using Student Handout 1.3, have students read about the origins of indigo. They should label on the map where indigo production took place. They may choose their symbol for Indigo, perhaps the letter “I” or the color of indigo. Whatever they choose, this will be their symbol for indigo throughout the whole unit.

4. Using Student Handout 1.4, have students read about the origins of tea. Students should label on the map where tea was cultivated. They may choose their symbol for Tea, perhaps the letter “T” or a symbol of a tealeaf. Whatever they choose, this will be their symbol for tea throughout the whole unit.

Feel free to have students substitute the map on Student Handout 1.1 with a larger one if they need more space. Students will be using a different map each day to trace how products move through the global economy. It would be ideal if you as the teacher made transparencies of the maps—one for each of the products. On the last day of the unit, lay the maps on top of each other to show students how the movement of products overlapped all over the world as part of the assessment activity.

Assessment

Now that students have labeled where all three products originated, they should look carefully at their first map. They should write in a few sentences any observations they can make about where the products were produced. What kind of conclusions can they make based solely on where the products originated? What other kinds of information do they need in order to explain the global economy from 1500 to 1800?



Lesson 1

Student Handout 1.2—Origins of Fur

During the 1500s, Europeans began exploring the east coast of mainland North America. They traded items such as knives, hatchets, and beads to Native Americans for fur and meat. Indian trappers such as the Iroquois brought beaver furs from the interior to the St. Lawrence River and traded there for manufactured goods from Europe. Out of these early exchanges a formal fur trade was born in North America. It began in the area that is today modern Quebec. Because the best pelts were from areas that had severe winters, most trade was in Canada. Some trade, however, also developed along the Mississippi River and to the west in the Rocky Mountains.

Student Handout 1.3—Origins of Indigo

True indigo comes from a plant species called *Indigofera*, which is a subtropical shrub that grows to be 4-6 feet tall. The leaves of the indigo plant are what make the beautiful blue dye that indigo is famous for around the world. The word indigo comes from ancient Greek, meaning “the Indian dye” or indiko. This is a clue about where the ancient Mediterranean world got indigo from.

Many different species of *Indigofera* have been found all over the world from Australia to Madagascar. Many societies have used the plant’s blue dye for religious, cultural, social, political, and aesthetic purposes. Various species of the plant have been found in Guatemala and Peru, where they were used for a variety of purposes long before Europeans came to the Americas. Indigo also grows wild all over the African coast and has been used as a symbol of wealth and fertility in West African societies for centuries. Modern day countries like Mali, Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, and Burkina Faso all have a rich history of dye techniques using indigo. Asian societies including India, Indonesia, Japan, and China have a long tradition of using indigo to print, dye, and do artistic work with textiles.

Student Handout 1.4—Origins of Tea

Tea is made of the dried leaves, buds, and flowers of the tea plant. It originated in Asia in what is now the border region between India and China. The first Chinese written reference to tea goes back to the first century BCE. By the fourth century BCE, tea was deliberately grown as a medicinal, religious, and popular drink. It first became the national beverage of China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 BCE).