

A History of the World in 6 Glasses by Tom Standage

Reading: *A History of the World in Six Glasses*

- ❖ *Disclaimer: The choice of this book as a summer reading assignment is in no way an endorsement of any of these beverages. This book merely offers a unique and interesting way of viewing the sometimes dry subject of economic history*

Beer:

"In both cultures [Egypt and Mesopotamia], beer was a staple food stuff without which no meal was complete. It was consumed by everyone, rich and poor, men and women, adults and children, from the top of the social pyramid to the bottom. It was truly the defining drink of these first great civilizations." (p.30)

1. According to Standage, how did the Fertile Crescent get its name?
2. How is beer production an example of plant domestication?
3. What effect did storing grain have on hunter-gatherer societies?
4. How was beer used by the Sumerian and Egyptian civilizations?
5. How did farming pave the way for the emergence of civilization?
- 6.

Wine: *Thucydides: "the peoples of the Mediterranean began to emerge from barbarism when they learned to cultivate the olive and the vine." (Pp.52-53)*

7. What did drinking wine symbolize in ancient Greece?
8. What role did wine play at the *symposion*?
9. What did drinking wine symbolize in ancient Rome?
10. What was a *convivium* and how did it reflect social status?
11. Why do Christians drink wine and Muslims do not?

Spirits: *"Rum was the liquid embodiment of both the triumph and the oppression of the first era of globalization." (p.111)*

12. From which advance civilization did Europeans get the "science" of making spirits?
13. In what ways was the "discovery" and use of distillation important to the rebirth of science in Europe? (How was distillation seen and which infant science did it go hand in hand with thus leading to further work! discovery? Also look at what sort of texts had to be translated and what that might have let to...)
14. How did spirits advance/accelerate colonialism?
15. In the 18th century, how did spirits help Britain become a more superior navy than France?
16. How did spirits help build America? (from getting the colonies off the ground to establishing our independence to the consolidation of power by the Federal government)
17. What were the negative effects/uses of spirits?

Coffee: *"Europe's coffeehouses functioned as information exchanges for scientists, businessmen, writers and politicians. Like modern web sites..." (p.152)*

18. Who did Europeans get coffee from and how did it spread to Europe?
19. What was the significance of people switching from alcohol to coffee?
20. Describe coffee's effect on the global balance of power (in terms of commerce).
21. How did coffee play a pivotal role in the scientific revolution?
22. How did coffee play a role in the "financial revolution"?
23. How did coffee play a role in the French Revolution?

Tea: *"The story of tea is the story of imperialism, industrialization and world domination one cup at a time." (p. 177)*

24. "If the sun never set on the British Empire, then it was always _____ somewhere."
25. What were the health benefits of tea?
26. Which conquering people established the largest contiguous land empire in history?
27. Compare and contrast Europe with China in terms of balance of trade, civilizations, etc.
28. How did the relationship between the government of Britain and the British East India Company change over time?

Coca Cola: *"To my mind, I am in this damn mess as much to help keep the custom of drinking Cokes as I am to help preserve the million other benefits our country blesses its citizens with ... " (p.253)*

29. What was America's unique contribution to manufacturing?
30. Why is the 20th century referred to as "the American century"?
31. How did Coca Cola become an American icon?
32. What was meant by Cola-Colonization?
33. Is Coca Cola an appropriate symbol of globalization? Why or why not?

Water: *"Six beverages have defined humankind's past, but which will embody its future? One drink has already emerged as the most likely candidate. Like many of the defining drinks of history, it is highly fashionable, is the subject of conflicting medical claims, and has unseen but far-reaching geopolitical significance. "(p.266)*

34. What evidence does Standage use to support his thesis that water has emerged as the beverage of the future?
35. Do you agree with his thesis? Explain and provide rationale.