

*A History of the World in Six Glasses* by Tom Standage  
World History II (Honors) Summer Reading Assignment  
Guideline Questions for *A History of the World in Six Glasses*

I think you will see that the book is meant to entertain and inform but it is not written for a “scholarly” audience. Still, I think Standage came up with a great way to illustrate some of the key elements which characterize the emerging field of World History: moments of change, points of comparison and patterns of connection.

Because you have studied early civilizations in your freshman year, we will spend very little time focused on the sections of the book on beer and wine. These sections are important however, in establishing the idea of how drinks (as essential expressions of culture) shaped economies, sparked trade, and advanced cultural practices.

The following are **guideline questions** for your summer reading. You will have an objective test on the book within the first few days of school, depending on the schedule. This will be a reading comprehension test so it is critical that you take notes and underline/highlight while you read to prompt your memory for this test. Another evaluation will follow our class discussion of the book.

### **Stone –Age Brew/Civilized Beer**

- What are the key characteristics of the hunter-gatherer period?
- How is the subject of a surplus of crops addressed?
- What was the role of beer in a “civilized” society?
- What is Standage’s explanation of the rise of the role of the priesthood within early societies and how is that connected to alcohol?
- In the section *A Drink from the Dawn of Civilization*, Standage summarizes his ideas. Be sure you can explain his conclusions.

### **The Delight of Wine/ the Imperial Vine**

- What role did wine play in Greek and later, Roman **societies**? Differences and/or similarities?
- What was the impact of increased wine production in the Roman Empire?
- What is the answer to the question posed in the section *Why Christians Drink Wine and Muslims Do Not?*

### **Spirits in the Colonial Period**

- The aspects of this section you need to pay special attention to are those dealing with sugar and slavery. No matter how many times I study this I am horrified and amazed by how commodities shaped (and continue to shape) world history, and the often terrible human toll.

### **Coffee**

- As hard as it is to believe, not everyone thought highly of coffee and coffee houses. What were some of the objections, who posed them and why?
- What was the Catholic Church’s position on the drink?

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- Describe the trade that grew up around coffee and how it shaped (or was shaped by) European traders.
- What role did the coffee houses play in British and French societies?
- Anthony Wood, a British social observer, complained about coffee-drinking students, posing the question “Why doth solid and serious learning decline, and few or none follow it in the university? Answer: Because of coffee-houses, where they spend all their time.” Was there any evidence to contradict his theory?

### Tea

- How did tea first spread throughout Asia and eventually to Europe?
- “What explains the speed and enthusiasm with which the British took to tea?” **Focus on the role of the British East India Company.**
- What was the global impact of the rise of the textile industry in Britain?
- What characteristics made Britain unusually well-qualified to become an industrial power (or, more specifically, THE industrial power)?
- I imagine that you have already been exposed to the issues that arose with tea and the American colonies. We will not spend too much time on this subtopic.
- The section entitled *Opium and Tea* is one of the most important in the book. This is a pivotal moment in World History and you need to be sure you have a firm grasp on what happened and why.
- How did the spread of tea cultivation shape the colonial period in India?

### Coca-Cola

- How would you compare American soldiers and their Cokes to Buddhist monks and their tea?
- How did Pepsi instead of Coke win the hearts of the Soviets? What about the Middle East?

### Water

- Looking forward, instead of at the past, many scholars believe that conflict over water will shape the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Identify two ways in which water, or the lack thereof, shapes the lives of people in developing countries.
- Identify two potential **political** flashpoints over water (regions or nations headed toward conflict over water).