

Columbian Exchange through Food

Purpose: Students will investigate New World and Old World Food origins to explore how the Columbian Exchange impacted people worldwide.

Time: 60 minutes

Level: 5

Materials:

- Samples of New World and Old World Foods grown in MN.

Old World Foods:

Soybeans – China
Sugar beets – Austria
Peas – India, Afghanistan
Onions – Pakistan
Carrots – Central Asia
Broccoli – Northern Europe
Lettuce – Iran, Turkistan
Radishes – China
Wheat – Turkey

New World Foods:

Corn – Central America
Potatoes – South America
Tomatoes – Mexico
Squash – South America
Pumpkins – Mexico
Beans – Central America
Peppers – Peru
Blueberries – United States
Strawberries – United States
Sunflowers – United States

- World Map
- Food Investigation Worksheet – one per student
- Old World Foods and New World Foods List – one per teacher
- Internet access



Minnesota Social Studies Standards and Benchmarks

5.4.4.16.2 Describe early interactions between indigenous peoples, Europeans and Africans, including the Columbian Exchange; identify the consequences of those interactions on the three groups.

Background

Global exploration and exchange significantly altered the lives of people around the world starting with one of their basic needs – food. Christopher Columbus’s discovery of the New World (North and South America) had one of the most far-reaching impacts on world civilization in history. Not only did it facilitate the rise of the Spanish Empire, but more importantly, it also brought about the Columbian Exchange—the term used to describe the significant transfer of crops, animals, and microorganisms after Columbus connected the Americas to the rest of the world. The effects of the Columbian Exchange dramatically altered the world balance as diseases ravaged the indigenous populations, Old World livestock altered the American ecosystems, and the world’s population experienced an extensive boom with the introduction of New World crops. This lesson focuses on the influence of Columbian Exchange on food across the world.

Procedure

1. Display and show examples of Minnesota grown crops and produce (See Materials list). If actual samples are not available use photos.
2. Lead a class discussion about the history of these crops and how and why they are grown in Minnesota today. Some questions to pose to students:
 - A. Why are potatoes (or other crop/produce) grown in Minnesota?
 - B. Do you think this food crop originated in MN? If yes, why? If not, why not and where do you think it originated?
 - C. What group of people do you think are responsible for domesticating this crop (Native Americans, American Colonist, Explorers, Europeans, Africans, Asians, etc.)
3. Inform students about the Columbian Exchange. Utilize excerpts from your Social Studies/History textbook, the background information in this lesson and additional resources. Some websites to review include:
 - A. Foods that Changed the World - <http://www.accessexcellence.org/RC/Ethnobotany/page5.php>
 - B. The Columbian Exchange - <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-twoworlds/1866>
4. Display a world map and point out the Old World continents and countries (Europe, Asia, and Africa) and New World Continents and countries (North and South America).

5. Hand out a Food Investigation Worksheet to each student. Inform them that you will be forming groups of 3-4 students. Each group will receive a sample (or photo) of a food crop. The group must form and record a hypothesis (educated guess) identifying the food's origin in the Old World or New World. Things to consider while forming this hypothesis: growing conditions for the crop, any historical significance of the crop you are aware of, countries where you think a lot of this crop are consumed, etc.
6. Assign groups and pass out the food crop samples. Allow students 5 minutes to discuss and form and record a hypothesis. Ask groups to share their hypothesis and reasoning.
7. After all groups have shared, show the list of the Old World and New World Foods. Have each group record on their Food Investigation Worksheet if their hypothesis was correct. Discuss as a class any surprise origins and also answer questions that arise.
8. Instruct students to complete the rest of their Food Investigation Worksheet using reliable websites and reliable sources. A few websites are listed on the worksheets to help students get started.

Additional Activities

Use Google Maps or Google Earth to plot the origins and regional movements of each food crop. Embed the research findings and any relevant multimedia. Teachers can also set up a shared Google Map that allows everyone in the class to contribute to a single map.

Utilize the PBS program “When Worlds Collide” and website for additional resources and video on the Columbian Exchange.

<http://www.pbs.org/kcet/when-worlds-collide/>

Research foods that are uncommon in MN and the US but have cultural or historical significance in other parts of the world. Look for samples of these foods in specialty stores or sections of your local grocery store. Bring samples for students to try. Use the sample to discuss the influence of food around the world.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this information is available in alternative forms of communication upon request by calling 651/201-6000. TTY users can call the Minnesota Relay Service at 711 or 1-800-627-3529. The MDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Name _____

Food Investigation

Work as a team to discuss the following questions concerning your food crop, its origin and how it came to be grown in Minnesota. Please record your answers below.

1. What is your food crop? _____
2. Do you think it is an Old World Food or a New World Food? _____
 - a. Why?
3. Was your answer for question 2 correct? _____
4. Explain the continent, country and conditions (climate, soil, and additional resources) in the location where your food crop originated. Website to get you started: www.foodtimeline.org
5. What conditions does Minnesota have in common with the site of origin of your food crop? Use these commonalities to explain how and why the food crop is currently grown in Minnesota. Website to get you started: <http://www1.extension.umn.edu/food/>
6. What historical significance does your food crop have? Explain any impacts on conflicts and wars, cultural celebrations, or additional unique influences your crop has had throughout the world's history.

Investigating the Columbian Exchange through Old World Foods and New World Foods

Old World Foods

Food	Continent/Country/Region of Origin
Beef Cattle	Southwestern Asia
Broccoli	Northern European coast
Carrots	Central Asia (Afghanistan)
Chickens	China, India
Coffee	Ethiopia
Lettuce	Asia Minor
Onions	Pakistan, Central Asia
Peas	Northwest India, Afghanistan
Pigs	Southwest Asia
Radishes	China
Soybeans	Northeastern China
Sheep	Middle East, Central Asia
Sugar Beets	Austria
Wheat	Turkey

New World Foods

Food	Continent/Country/Region of Origin
Avocados	Mexico
Blueberries	United States
Chocolate	Southern Mexico
Corn (maize)	Central America
Beans	Central America
Peanuts	South America
Peppers	Peru
Potatoes	South America
Pumpkins	Mexico
Squash	South America
Strawberries	United States
Sweet Potatoes	Central America
Tomatoes	Southern Mexico
Turkeys	North America