

Study Questions for *A History of the World in 6 Glasses* by Tom Standage

This book was chosen as summer reading for World Literature because it provides a brief and entertaining overview of world history through discussion of 6 popular beverages: beer, wine, spirits, coffee, tea, and Coca-Cola. (It also discusses water in the epilogue.) In our study of literature from around the world and throughout history, it will be helpful for us to have a preliminary background in the historical periods presented in this book. Read the book and answer each question in a brief paragraph. You should not use any sources other than the book and your brain. (That would be cheating. If I detect evidence that other sources were used, I will give a grade of zero for the assignment.) This will be turned in for a test grade on the first day of class.

Beer in Mesopotamia and Egypt:

1. How is beer thought to have been “discovered”?
2. What were some of the uses of beer by ancient cultures?
3. What does the ancient *Epic of Gilgamesh* teach us about the role of beer in ancient Sumer?

Wine in Greece and Rome:

4. What was the role of wine in the feast of King Ashurnasirpal II of Assyria in 870 BCE?
5. What is a symposium in ancient Greek culture, and how was wine a major part of a symposium?
6. What was a Roman convivium, and how did it differ from the Greek symposium?

Spirits in the Colonial Period:

7. Explain the origin of distilled spirits.
8. How was the production of spirits related to slavery and the slave trade?
9. What role did spirits play in Colonial America and the American Revolution?

Coffee in the Age of Reason:

10. What was coffee’s role in the diffusion of rationalism?
11. Discuss the origins of coffee.
12. What role did coffee houses play in the intellectual, economic, and social world of the 18th century?

Tea and the British Empire:

13. Discuss the origins of tea drinking in China.
14. How was tea an important part of the Industrial Revolution?
15. What was the role of tea in the British rule over India?

Coca-Cola and the Rise of America:

16. Explain the origin of Coca-Cola.
17. How did the Coca-Cola Company use advertising to promote its product so successfully?
18. How and why did Coca-Cola become a symbol for America?