

OUR INTERCONNECTED WORLD

Purpose

This activity will provide you with an active demonstration of the global interconnectedness that exists in the world today, with a specific focus on the networks and production and distribution frames. Beginning the activity with a demonstration of our globalized world today and using relevant items from your daily lives will give you some context with which you can better analyze world connections that existed in previous time periods.

Practices

Contextualization, CCOT

This activity will help you contextualize the world that we live in today, but also the world in 1750 or in other periods of history. You'll also practice establishing patterns of continuity and change over time, and developing hypotheses for reasons for these changes.

Process

Your teacher will either hand out or have you download the Our Interconnected World Worksheet and provide you with directions for how this activity is structured. Your job is to use the narratives in the worksheet to illustrate how interconnected our world is today by tracing the production and distribution of three goods that you probably use or encounter on a daily basis. You'll then use the yarn your teacher will supply to trace the steps in the production and distribution of these products across networks of exchange.

As your teacher walks through the narratives for each of the products, think about how these products get into your hands. Where was the product manufactured? Where were the components of the product created? Where did the natural resources used in the product originate?

At the end of the activity, think about how many of these connections existed between consumers and producers and distributors 50 or 100 years ago, during your grandparents' lifetimes or even your great-grandparents' lifetimes. There are three rounds to this activity. Each round will highlight some of the key goods that were traded across networks during three time periods: 1450, 1750, and today. Finally, you'll answer the questions in Part 4 of the worksheet. Be prepared to share your answers and reasoning with your class.

OUR INTERCONNECTED WORLD

Name: Date:

Directions: Use the following narratives with the balls of yarn to demonstrate networks that exist today and those that existed in 1750 and in 1450, to see how those networks of interconnection have changed over time.

Part 1

Networks of today

Product	Regions of Production and Distribution
iPhone	Apple iPhones are designed in California. These designs are then manufactured in Asia, mainly in China and Taiwan. Components for the phone are produced in a variety of regions. For example, the cameras are from Japan, the processors are from South Korea and Taiwan, and the gyroscopes are from France and Italy. There are also all of the elements or raw materials that go into the production of an iPhone. In fact, smart phones are made up of about 60 to 70 different elements on the periodic table. That means that many of these raw materials come from a variety of regions, such as Australia, Mexico, Chile, Turkey, and Rwanda.
Nike sneakers	Nike shoes are designed in the US but they are mainly manufactured in China and Vietnam. The shoes are made of various materials including rubber, plastic, leather, and polyester. According to Nike, in 2017 the leather was sourced from China, Vietnam, Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Australia, and Brazil. The rubber was from Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Cotton was sourced from the US, India, Turkey, and China. The polyester came mainly from India and China.
Starbucks iced coffee	Starbucks works with coffee growers in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, including nations such as India, Guatemala, Rwanda, Mexico, Tanzania, Colombia, China, Ethiopia, Brazil, Indonesia, the United States, and Costa Rica. The company has close to 30,000 stores on six of the seven continents of the world. The cups and straws come from distribution centers in North America, Asia, and Europe. The milk is sourced locally from dairy farms in every region of the world and delivered to stores.

Part 2

Networks of 1750

Product	Regions of Production and Distribution
Sugar	The production of sugar from the sugarcane plant has a long history in Afro-Eurasia. First cultivated in India around 500 BCE, it was considered a luxury item that traveled extensively over trade networks across three continents. Columbus and his crew introduced the plant to the Americas in the fifteenth century and sugar plantations were established based on those already in existence in Portuguese colonies off the coast of Africa. Sugar then became the driver of the plantation system and the Atlantic slave trade. Sugar plantations in the Caribbean and Brazil operated on a 24-hour basis, fueled by the labor of the enslaved. Plantation owners made huge profits and sent the refined product on boats across the Atlantic to consumers in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Sugar became “white gold” and consumers in Europe, in particular, drove the demand for this product. Sugar and the sugar trade became the catalyst for revolution (in Haiti), the fuel for factory workers and industrialization, and made European powers extremely wealthy.

OUR INTERCONNECTED WORLD

Name: Date:

Silver	Silver was a product mined in parts of Afro-Eurasia and used as currency in the ancient world. Some regions of the world had more silver than others, and it was prized as a valuable metal for centuries. For example, silver deposits are limited in China, but this society received many silver coins in exchange for the goods they produced that other nations desperately wanted, such as tea and porcelain. In the fifteenth century, the Spanish established control over silver production in the Americas and most areas of the world began trading in silver, making it the first global currency. In fact, it was really the only thing that the Chinese wanted from European merchants who were trying to break into their markets to expand networks of exchange. About 30 percent of the silver produced and distributed from the Spanish colonies in America was traded to China, but silver made its way all across the globe including to areas such as India, Japan, Europe, and Africa.
Forced labor (enslaved peoples and indentured servants)**	<p>The trading of enslaved peoples occurred throughout human history. Usually, people were captured during times of war and enslaved, at times forced to travel far from their native lands. In some periods of history, it was possible for the enslaved to earn their freedom after they paid off their service, either through labor or currency. But slavery was transformed into a different type of institution with the start of the Atlantic slave trade. The enslavement of millions of Africans forced from their homes to make the dangerous journey to the Americas occurred on a scale never before seen. In total, over 12 million were taken from Africa and transferred mainly to South America, the Caribbean, and North America. In addition, people in Europe and Asia migrated, both voluntarily and involuntarily, to the Americas to work as indentured servants. The indentured usually entered into contracts with people who paid for their passage across the Atlantic in exchange for a defined number of years of labor. Many were treated in much the same way as the enslaved, although there was an expiration date for the service of indentured servants, unlike those who were enslaved.</p> <p><i>** Note: We've deliberately chosen to include forced labor as a commodity in this activity. The reasoning behind this is that from an eighteenth-century perspective, the enslaved and in many cases the indentured, at least for their period of servitude, were viewed as property. In addition, we think this is an important perspective for you to learn about as well as learn from.</i></p>

Part 3

Networks of 1450

Product	Regions of Production and Distribution
Silk	The production of silk was a closely guarded process that began in China c. 3000 BCE. For over a thousand years, China controlled silk production and distribution, with silk products traveling across the Silk Road trade routes. These routes connected different communities both along the Silk Road and beyond to areas that benefited from this trade. The communities along the Silk Roads in the fifteenth century included the Byzantine Empire (Constantinople); the Ottoman Empire (Istanbul); Italian city-states; the Mughal Empire (India); the Ming dynasty (China); and a wide variety of nomadic pastoral societies. The regions that benefited from this trade, lying outside the routes, were the Rus Empire (Moscow); the Mali Empire (west Africa); Kingdom of Kongo (west Africa); the Ethiopian Empire (east Africa); the Holy Roman Empire; and other European kingdoms including Spain, Portugal, France, and Britain. Silk became a highly sought product by those who could afford it. The wealthy in Ancient Rome were particularly fond of the product.

OUR INTERCONNECTED WORLD

Name:

Date:

Cinnamon	Spices such as cinnamon originated in Southeast Asia and were traded along the Silk Road and Indian Ocean trade routes for centuries. This spice and others, such as ginger, cardamom, and pepper, traveled from Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent to societies in Arabia and the Mediterranean world in much the same way that silk was traded. While the spices themselves were relatively inexpensive to produce, the journey from their origin to other communities across Afro-Eurasia meant that the spices were transferred between many traders. This made the spices pretty expensive since each trader wanted to make a profit from the movement of spices across these networks. The city-states of Italy had long been a part of this trade across sea networks that connected Europe to the Far East. But western Europeans also wanted to participate in this trade, which led them to find new sea routes to India and Asia.
Cacao (cocoa)	The cacao tree was cultivated in Central and South America from about 3,500 years ago. The Maya used the cocoa beans as a type of currency across exchange networks throughout the region. Evidence from modern botanical studies shows that different species of the bean were traded in the Amazon basin region of South America to the Mayan Empire in Central America and present-day Mexico, and then further north into what is now the southwestern portion of the United States. The beans were used to make a bitter drink that was used in ceremonies and as a drink for those of the upper classes.

Part 4

Using the information learned in this activity, answer the following questions:

1. In what ways were the networks different when comparing 1450, 1750, and today?

OUR INTERCONNECTED WORLD

Name:

Date:

2. In what ways were the networks similar across these three time periods?

3. What turning points from 1450 to 1750 might have sparked these changes?