

# Reading response of the two readings

[History](#)



February 5, For the Love of Luxury Goods: Money and War in Colonial Trade

In “ Brewing Up a Storm,” Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topik assert that the British became fonder of tea in the eighteenth century because of the availability of cheap sweetener, sugar, and changes in social and economic structures and practices. They note that sugar became cheaper because of the expanding slave trade that provided free labor to grow and harvest sugar, and that with cheaper sugar, the English found tea more affordable and better-tasting. 1 Changes in social and economic structures and practices included the shift of artisans from working at their own homes to workshops and factories, where tea became part of daily routines, replacing gin and beer as the national beverage. 2 In “ A Taste of Empire, 1600-1800,” James Walvin argues that the demand for luxury staples, such as sugar, tea, tobacco, and chocolate, are products of social and economic changes in British life. He asserts that the demand for tea increased because Britain also became a world superpower who used slavery trade and wars to attain their economic ends. 3

Both Pomeranz and Topik and Walvin agree that tea is related to trade and colonialism because it is a product of international trade and demand for it increased because of the need for other luxury staple products. Pomeranz and Topik and Walvin note the increasing demand for tea using the same information that tea became popular in Europe during the eighteenth century because of cheaper sweeteners. They are also similar in addressing the slave trade that became an important driver to reducing the prices of sugar and to highlighting the role of trade to expanding colonialism. Walvin asserts that the slave trade decreased sugar prices, 4 and Pomeranz and Topik agree that the “ availability of cheap sweetener” encouraged tea

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consumption. 5 What is different between the two is that Pomeranz and Topik focus on workshops and factories as main social influencers of tea consumption, 6 while Walvin is more general in emphasizing that even the poor in Europe, especially in Britain, drank tea in large amounts. 7 Walvin further informs the text of Pomeranz and Topik by describing the slave trade, and how Britain's rise as a commercial and military power played a role in its global trade goals and practices, 8 whereas Pomeranz and Topik shows how the British used the Opium War to manage its tea trade with China. 9

#### Works Cited

Pomeranz, Kenneth, and Steven Topik, eds. " Brewing Up a Storm." *The World that Trade Created: Society, Culture, and the World Economy, 1400 to the Present*. NY: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 2006. 77-80. Print.

Walvin, James. " A Taste of Empire, 1600-1800." *History Today* 47. 1 (January 1997) 11-16. Print.