

Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science Study Guide

Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science by Marc Aronson

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Part I.....	5
Part II.....	7
Part III.....	11
Part IV.....	15
Characters.....	17
Objects/Places.....	20
Themes.....	22
Style.....	24
Quotes.....	25
Topics for Discussion.....	27



Plot Summary

Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science by Marc Aronson and Marina Budhos tells the history of sugar. Beginning with the discovery of sugar, the authors trace the history of how it became popular, how its usage spread around the world, and how it affected the lives of the rich and the poor.

Around 510 BC, Herodotus wrote about a sweet reed that produced honey. Much later, around 326 BC, Nearchus came across this reed as he set out to investigate India's coast. Cane sugar traces back to the area we now call New Guinea, and most likely it was cultivated by humans for approximately 5,000 years or more before the Greeks. The first written record of the substance was from India. According to Hindu writings, it was used in religious ceremonies, put in a special fire to offer to the gods.

Priests noticed that when the sugar cane was boiled in a certain way, it formed into sweet, brown clumps. Originally, it was said that sugar was medicine. Warfare brought knowledge of sugar to many people, as did fairs. People began to use it as a spice, and they continued to use it as medicine. More people began to grow sugarcane, and they learned to process it. People began to build plantations to produce large quantities of sugar. To keep the plantations running, many used slaves.

Life as a slave was brutal. They worked long, hard hours in extremely hot conditions. Exhausted workers lost limbs and sometimes their lives as overseers drove them to complete tasks. They were beaten and tortured if they didn't do what they were supposed to do, and the price for running away was extremely steep.

Back in Europe, sugar was available for all classes, not just the wealthy. The people of England learned about hot drinks such as hot chocolate, tea, and coffee. They sweetened the drinks with sugar. Poor people found tea to be a cheap substitute for the beer they usually made. Factory workers used tea and sugar as a way to get enough energy to make it through the work day. It was truly the Age of Sugar.

Some people began questioning the morality of slavery. Were all men created equal as some stated? If so, what did this mean in regards to owning slaves? During the 1700s, there was great unrest in Europe. Abolitionists protested slavery, educating the masses on what was really going on in sugar production. Europeans fought for their own rights, but they wanted to continue owning others.

The slaves starting fighting for equality and rebelled. The Republic of Haiti was born in 1804. By the 1800s, Hawaii became another primary place of sugar production. Here, the plantations were not worked by slaves from Africa. People from China, Japan, the Philippines, and Portugal worked for extremely low wages on these plantations.

In India and other places, people hired desperate workers who would sign on for a certain number of years in exchange for daily wages, food, and clothing. The work was hard, and the wages were very low. While the people weren't technically slaves, their



lives were very similar. Scientists found new ways to make sweet substances that could take the place of sugar. The indentured people rose up, and slavery was abolished. The Age of Sugar was over.



Part I

Part I Summary and Analysis

Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science by Marc Aronson and Marina Budhos tells the history of sugar. Beginning with the discovery of sugar, the authors trace the history of how it became popular, how its usage spread around the world, and how it affected the lives of the rich and the poor.

Part I

From Magic to Spice - In 326 BC, Alexander the Great appointed his close friend as Captain of an 800-ship fleet, then he sent the fleet off to investigate India's coast. His friend, Nearchus, came upon the "sweet reed." The Greeks knew a bit about India, thanks to the writings of Herodotus. In the writings, Herodotus reported that Darius the First invaded India around 510 BC. While he was there, his men found a sweet reed that produced honey. Most likely, the reed was sugar cane.

Gods and Rituals - Cane sugar can be traced back to New Guinea. Most likely, cane was cultivated by humans around 5000 years or more before the Greeks. It was a wild plant that people enjoyed, then they learned how to cultivate it. It spread to the Asian mainland, and Polynesian seafarers took it to Hawaii around 1,180. According to the first written records about sugar, it was used in magical ceremonies and religious ceremonies in India.

Hindu writings talked about a special fire wherein special items were selected for burning. These included cheese, milk, honey, butter, and sugar cane. As the sugar cane was offered in fire, priests noticed that the juice of the sugar cane developed into sweet, brown clumps if the cane was boiled in the right way. In ancient India, sugar was considered medicine.

The World's First True University - Jundi Shapur was built sometime between 400 and 500 A.D. in the area we now know as Iran. The school was a place where great minds met and was the first teaching hospital in the world. By the 600s, school doctors wrote about the medicine from India. It was sugar. At the school, scholars found better ways to refine sugar cane into sugar. Cooks began using sugar as a spice as they cooked for the wealthy.

The Storm of God - Islam was spreading throughout North Africa, the Mediterranean, through the Iberian Peninsula, and over to France. It became a popular religion in Egypt, India, Persia, and the Christian Mediterranean. Along with Islam came a tremendous growth of knowledge. As the Muslims conquered lands around the Mediterranean Sea, they taught others how to grow, mill, and refine sugar. Egypt became known for its sugar production. The people made various types of sugar ranging from dark molasses to very pure, white sugar.



Fortress Europe - People in Europe used many spices with their foods. In the 1100s, rich Europeans began to add more flavor to their food thanks to wars and fairs. Beginning somewhere around 1150, Europeans could buy and sell products from other parts of the world at one of the six Champagne fairs.

The Champagne Fairs - The markets opened in January near Paris. They stayed open for two months with merchants from around Europe coming to trade. After the first one ended, five more French cities held fairs, each for two months at a time. These fairs were very organized, and people could buy items ranging from fruit to cloth. Next to the fruits and spices were piles of medicine that Italians bought from the Muslims. The medicine was sugar. The fairs lasted until the 1300s.

Out of War Comes Sweetness - The Christians set out to take the land back from the Muslims during the Crusades. Along with war came an information exchange. Europeans began to learn more about mathematics and windmills. The windmills helped the Europeans learn how to drain swamps so they could use lands that previously had no use. The Christians also learned more about sugar. The Muslims had taught them how to plant sugar cane and how to refine it. This was important, because growing sugar was easy, but processing it was not.

The Problem with Sugar Cane - There were actually two problems with sugar production when one wanted to make vast amounts of it. One problem was time, and the other problem was fire. This sweet mass inside the stalks turned woody if they didn't get into a boiling vat on time. The Muslims set up a process, which later became known as a sugar plantation. It organized planting, growing, cutting, and refining crops. Large groups of workers worked together to process the sugar from cutting to final production. Both Muslims and Christians began using slaves to work on the sugar plantations. Many of these slaves came from Russia or were prisoners from war.

The second problem was making the fires that kept the vats boiling. There was a huge need for wood since they hadn't yet figured out that they could use crushed cane stalks as fuel. In the 1400s, Spain and Portugal competed to explore the coast of Africa. They wanted to find cheaper spices. Along the way, they began to build sugar plantations on the islands, using African slaves to work them. One sailor in particular became famous as he traded in "white gold" (sugar). His name was Christopher Columbus.

Part II

Part II Summary and Analysis

Hell - It was early morning on a Caribbean island, and hundreds of African slaves were working hard in the fields. The plants that Columbus had brought to the island were flourishing, and now there were sugar plantations all over the island. Europeans found that growing sugar in the New World and using slave labor brought incredible wealth. The first place with a sugar planting boom was Hispaniola. It remained popular there until the Europeans learned about the Aztec gold in Mexico and moved on.

Brazil became the next popular place to grow sugar for the Europeans. Then, Barbados became sugar island, and the French began growing sugar on Hispaniola. The more sugar plantations there were, the more people became enslaved. Many slaves were brought in from Africa to work the plantations.

When the first boat arrived from Europe to Brazil in 1500, it was an accident. Pedro Cabral was trying to sail around Africa to get to Asia where he could buy spices for his native Portugal. However, the ocean current brought him to Brazil instead. This was the same current that easily brought slaves across the Atlantic to Brazil. In fact, over the next 400 years, around three million Africans were brought to Brazil as slaves.

Between 1701 and 1810, the island of Barbados received 252,500 enslaved Africans. Around the time that England took Jamaica from Spain (1665), 662,400 Africans were taken to Jamaica. The English continued to fill Antigua, St. Kitts, and Nevis with sugar mills and slaves. They also took over Dutch Guiana.

The French began to see how much the English were making from sugar, and they scrambled to turn their half of Hispaniola as well as Guadeloupe, Martinique, and French Guiana into sugar colonies. They filled these colonies with hundreds of thousands of African slaves. By 1753, 34,250 slaves from Africa were brought in on British ships every year. By 1768, the ships carried 53,100 slaves.

Because of the great quantities, sugar became very affordable. Even the common people could afford it. Scientists have discovered humans that innately craved sweetness, and cane sugar was the first product in the history of humans that satisfied that desire for sweetness. It drove the economy between the 1600s and the 1800s, creating a link between Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. It was truly the Age of Sugar.

A Cycle of Death and Sweetness - The Africans were expected to work, not to learn. However, Olaudah Equiano, a man who claimed he was taken from Africa to Barbados to work in sugar, learned to write. He wrote his life story as an autobiography. The man lived from approximately 1745 to 1797. In his writings, he described what it was like to be brought to the island and then sold.



Whether an African ended up in South America or the Caribbean, the sugar machine was the same. It was a brutal cycle. Workers were sent to work rough ground where they would clear a space of five inches deep and 5 feet square. They dug holes, having to work quickly without stopping. On one French island, overseers beat slaves who didn't carve out at least 28 holes within one hour. Frequently, the slaves lived in open sheds that were built in damp places.

Seeders had the job of pushing cane cuttings into the holes and covering them with soil. A weeder would follow afterwards, carefully picking away any undergrowth. It was some of the worst labor and had to be done as often as three times as the cane grew. A weeder would spend 10 to 14 hours a day bent over, using a hoe to dig out unwanted growth and ignoring the rats. There were rats everywhere. Records from one plantation in Jamaica showed that they captured 3,000 rats in 6 months. The weeding was generally done by slight men, young boys, and women since it did not require great arm strength.

A specialist was a person who is trained to watch the cane grow and alert others to when the plants were ripe and ready to be cut. As the plants ripened, a group of slaves was sent off to cut wood for the boiling vats, and another group brought the timber back to the boiling house. Once it was time to harvest, the cutters worked brutal shifts. Slaves had to bring enough sugar cane to feed into the mills to satisfy the overseers. One report from 1689 showed that each pair of workers was expected to cut and bind 4,200 stalks a day.

While cutting the cane was hard, the next step was even worse. The mills were not allowed to stop grinding during work hours. These were tended by exhausted women who got almost no rest. Frequently an ax was placed near the rollers so that if a slave closed her eyes while pushing the stalks into the mill, her arm might be hacked off before she was pulled to the grinder. Guests at the sugar plantations commented frequently on the numerous one-armed people they saw.

The grinding season varied between four and 10 months depending on local growing conditions. During this time, slaves worked day after day without much break. Sugar gushed out of the mills, running down wooden gutters into the boiling house. This was a building with massive furnaces and cauldrons. The syrup was heated and turned into crystals after straining. The workers had to stay awake so that they wouldn't slip into the boiling vats.

A highly skilled slave would watch the boiling syrup and determine when to pour the juice from one cauldron to another. At the proper time, the syrup was taken off the fire to cool into crystals that became grains of sugar. Once the sugar became a pile of crystals, it needed to be purified again. Sometimes, the crystals would sit out for a month, watched by the "mothers of the platform." These were slave women who knew how to tend the crystals, separating out the purest, whitest sugar from the brown granules that were less valuable.



Portrait Gallery of Sugar Work - Even though sugar plantations were farms, they were run like factories with humans as the machines. Paintings and photographs showed individuals at work over the centuries. They all worked through the same process.

The Pulse of Sugar Life - Since the Africans were there to work, nobody interviewed them. However, their story could be told through music. The Africans invented dances, songs, and music that expressed the beat of their lives. In Puerto Rico the sugar workers invented bomba. It was the workers' expression, saying that they weren't there just to work. They were alive, and they could be together in their own language.

In Cuba, the sugar workers told their story through the rumba. In Brazil, there was a similar dance called the Maculele, which looked like combat training. It was the way the slaves imitated warfare without actually defying their masters.

There were some slaves who tried to run away. To prevent this, owners made the price of flight extremely high. The overseer was hired to spread terror throughout the workers so they wouldn't run away.

The Overseer - Thomas Thistlewood arrived in Jamaica in 1750. He was 29 years old. He knew his job was to make sure that he was so terrifying that the slaves who worked for him would not run away or fight against him. Equiano wrote that that for the most part, overseers were the worse character of any denomination of man in the West Indies.

Overseers were hired by the owners of the plantation. The owners usually built a home on a high hill where the tropical breezes blew. The home would be called the Great House. These homes were very fancy and contained imported furniture and verandas on which the owners would sit and relax with fancy drinks. Oddly, the owners rarely used the homes. As soon as they had enough money, the owners would go back to Europe with their families.

Thistlewood learned how to strike fear into slaves very quickly. He found numerous torturous punishments for them when they didn't do what was required of them. There was one enslaved woman for whom he seemed to care. She lived with him for many years, and he freed her. However, as the overseer he had absolute power. By his own account, he was involved with 138 enslaved women. The real problem with working on the plantation as a slave was the fact that a master could do anything he wanted. Slaves were not allowed to resist. Their life was hell for many reasons.

Many think of slavery as a problem specific to the United States. However, only 4% of slaves from Africa were brought to North America. The other 96% were taken to Brazil, South America, and the Caribbean. Most of the slaves worked with sugar. While the slave population in North America grew over time, on the sugar plantations, slaves died.

Back in Europe - By 1555, Europeans obtained sugar easily. They used it as table decorations and artwork. Rich people used sugar to show off their wealth. Something new came into the picture—tea.



"The Best Sort of Chaw" - The first mention of tea from the mouth of the European occurred in 1615 when Mr. Wickham wrote to Mr. Eaton asking him to purchase some tea. In 1662, Catherine of Braganza married Charles II from England, and she made tea drinking popular in English court. Knowing that people followed the king and queen's actions, managers of the East India Company stocked up on tea, and it became an immediate hit. Doctors told people that tea was good for their health, and the English drank up to 50 cups a day. The North Americans drank even more tea. Most tea drinkers added spoonfuls of sugar to the drink.

By itself, tea was bitter, as were two other popular drinks that came to Europe during the 1600s. The drinks were hot chocolate and coffee. In 1652, a Turkish man opened the first coffee shop in England. Outside Europe, people enjoyed their hot drinks bitter. However, Europeans added sugar to those three hot drinks. In the early 1700s, an average Englishman consumed around four pounds of sugar each year. 100 years later, it was 18 pounds. The amount kept increasing over time.

After the 1750s, sugar transformed the European diet. Chefs began splitting up meals and serving desserts. Sugar wasn't only for the wealthy. It became the foundation of the diet of the poorest workers in England.

According to tradition, English workers brewed their own beer, which they ate along with bread as a main food source. By the late 1700s, a Scottish writer commented on the fact that tea became an economical substitute for the beer, which they could no longer afford.

Many of the poor English worked in factories. By the early 1900s, the factories were in full swing. The workers couldn't take breaks at will. They needed a cheap food that they could easily carry to work with them, and that food needed to give them enough energy to last until break. They would dip bread into a quick cup of tea that was sweetened with sugar. Smart manufacturers realized that the workers got a jolt from the sweetness. They began offering workers candies and cookies as a "pick me up" to help them through their shifts.

By 1900, sugar was used in cakes, tea, jams, syrups, and the world production of sugar reached six million tons. By that time, the average person in England ate approximately 90 pounds of sugar each year. The number kept rising. Today, if you consider all the different forms of sweeteners, an average American eats approximately 140 pounds of sugar every year.

The Age of Sugar - Factories, enslavement, and global trade clearly showed that by the mid-1800s, the world had moved from the Age of Honey to the Age of Sugar. The labor of the slaves helped make the Industrial Age possible. When enslaved Africans began to speak, Europeans began to see them as humans. This was how the Age of Sugar also came to be known as the Age of Freedom.

Part III

Part III Summary and Analysis

Freedom - All Men Are Equal - A great change in the world could be traced back to one circumstance. It was when Madame Villeneuve visited France in 1714. She brought an enslaved woman from the Caribbean with her as a personal servant. The slave's name was Pauline. As Madame Villeneuve set off to visit Paris from the coast, she left Pauline in a convent. While she was there, Pauline decided to become a nun herself, and the nuns agreed that she could. Madame Villeneuve was very angry about this, and she went to a judge so she could demand that she have her property back.

Twenty-three years prior, King Louis XIV ruled that slavery was legal in the French sugar islands, but the slaves were free once they hit France. The judges sided with Pauline. This made slave owners very unhappy, and they argued that owners ought to be able to list slaves as property when they arrived in France. When they left France, they ought to be able to take the slave back with them. Many parts of France agreed with this, but lawmakers in Paris hesitated. Pierre Lemerre the Younger insisted, back in 1716, that all men were equal.

It was an interesting era because Europeans were fighting for their own freedoms. They wanted to have the right to vote, speak out, and challenge rules of their governors. Yet, they felt it was fine to own slaves to keep the sugar plantations running.

All Men Are Created Equal: America - On April 7, 1765, some men from Rhode Island blackened their faces and boarded the Polly, stripping the ship of its cargo. This cargo included barrels of molasses from the sugar islands. They did this in protest because of the taxes placed on sugar. The Americans wanted to show control of property, feeling as if they would be slaves if they didn't.

The Caribbean planters enjoyed living in England, and often found their way into Parliament where they could set the rules. William Beckford himself became a Mayor of London and a member of Parliament. These sugar lords wanted to make sure that American colonists would only buy from them so they added taxes to any molasses that didn't come from an English source.

Instead of working, the Molasses Act inspired Americans to become better smugglers. England fought back by offering tighter restrictions. Americans protested even more. The colonists felt as if they were slaves. It was time for the world to seriously think about slavery and all it stood for. A school assignment made a huge change.

"Is It Lawful to Make Slaves of Others against Their Will?" - Every year at Cambridge University, a prize was given to the writer of the best essay written in Latin. It was a huge honor. In 1785, Thomas Clarkson wrote an essay about slavery. As he wrote, he



convinced himself that slavery was very wrong. He became one of the first men to fight against it. Decades later, these people would be called abolitionists.

The abolitionists were brilliant in their marketing. They created effective public campaigns to inform others in regards to what really went on during the production of sugar. They began to boycott to fight slavery, and around 400,000 English people stopped purchasing sugar grown and harvested by slaves. Instead, they bought sugar from India that was labeled "produced by the labor of FREEMEN." The revolution spread to France.

All Men Are Created Equal: France - In August of 1789, the National Assembly issued the Declaration of Rights of Man and the Citizen. Revolutionaries rose up against nobles, yet they weren't sure what to do about enslaved Africans on the sugar islands. By the fall of 1791, the French passed a law stating that people of mixed background and free blacks were equal to all other Frenchmen. Even as the French revolutionaries passed these anti-slavery laws, they began to execute their own nobles and the lords using the guillotine. This sent a message that chaos and terror would ensue when property rights were messed with.

The Sound of Liberty - By the late 1700s, the land we now know as Haiti (then Saint Domingue) was the center of sugar for the world. One night, on August 14, 1791, commanders from the richest sugar plantations gathered in Alligator Woods and decided to destroy anything related to sugar. By the end of August, the French colony was in flames. The fight against change and sugar was led by Toussaint. The fighters weren't just fighting against the terrible conditions on their islands. They fought for principles they had learned from the Americans and Europeans. They wanted equality, liberty, and fraternity.

Two years later, on August 29, 1793, the leading French official on Saint Domingue realized that there was no longer any point in opposing Toussaint and his followers. That following February, Paris agreed. The idea that all men were created equal and that no man was property terrified the English. The slaves were beginning to stand up for themselves.

Back in France, the same government that had abolished slavery was beginning to destroy itself. In 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte seized power and made his own rules. He reversed the law that freed the slaves, recognizing how important sugar was to his nation. In 1802, his men captured Toussaint and imprisoned him in France. The great man died in prison in 1803. Still, the former slaves fought on. After two years of fighting, around 50,000 French soldiers died. January 1, 1804, the Republic of Haiti was born. Still, they lived in fear.

The leaders of the American Revolution watched what was going on, and Thomas Jefferson refused to recognize Haiti. It was after 1862 when Abraham Lincoln finally reestablished relations with Haiti.



Over in Europe, things were changing. Napoleon's sugar dreams failed, and France was no longer in the middle of a revolution. The abolitionists in England started asking their countrymen to consider whether England was a nation built on Christian beliefs or one based on treating people as property. In 1806, anti-slavery forces brought a bill before Parliament requesting a limit of British involvement in slave trade. In their arguments, the abolitionists brought up the suffering of the man and woman in slavery. As Parliament debated, Clarkson and the others went around England giving lectures and talking about the harsh truths of slavery.

William Wilberforce, another leader of the abolitionists, commented that God could turn the hearts of men. In 1807, the bill banning English involvement in slave trading passed the House of Commons, then the House of Lords. The law was signed by King George III on March 25, 1807.

The Sugar Purchase and the Death State

In the 1930s, reporters traveled to the American South, capturing history by talking with African-Americans who were born as slaves. Ellen Betts recalled life on the sugar plantation in Louisiana. They worked hour after hour, and the fields seemed to stretch into each other. Ceceil George remembered the hard times of slavery when they had to work without rest. They didn't even get time off to worship. Sugar was the god of the people, and work was their only religion.

Napoleon needed money to pay for his wars so he sold the Louisiana territory to Jefferson. Instead of calling it the Louisiana Purchase, it would almost be more accurate to call it the Sugar Purchase. Sugar planters fled from Haiti's revolutions to Louisiana, but conditions there were horrible as well.

Working on a sugar plantation in Louisiana was even more difficult than working on a plantation in the Caribbean due to Louisiana's cold snaps. The slaves had to harvest the cane and process the crops between mid-October and December. This meant that they had to work faster than the weather.

Ephraim Knowlton was an estate manager in 1857. He made sure everyone was put to work, including the youngest children, who had to weed the cane fields. Most of the slaves died before they reached their 30s so Louisiana plantation owners bought the largest, sturdiest slaves they could find. The young teenage girls were there to have children. If a slave owner couldn't use a slave to help with the crop, he could still make money by selling the excess slaves. Just as in other areas, the slaves spoke through their music. The slaves in Louisiana spoke through jazz.

In 1811, Charles Deslondes, a free person of color, formed the largest slave revolt in the history of the United States. Ultimately, the revolt failed, but it showed the link between Haiti and Louisiana. United States sugar story centered on Louisiana, but even free states such as New York made fortunes by selling and transporting sugar. After the Civil War, the nation split and Northerners couldn't get cane from the plantations so they turned to another source—Hawaii.



Sugar in Paradise: "I Came Seeking the Dream" - Hawaii was the place where two journeys of sugarcane joined. The first inhabitants of Hawaii brought cane stalks with them back in 1100. In the 1800s, Europeans explored and found sugar stalks already growing. They brought their knowledge of plantations to the Hawaiian islands. Since the United States was in the middle of the Civil War, owners couldn't get Africans as workers so they looked to China.

In the 1850s, Chinese workers on sugar plantations were not well paid, but they weren't slaves, either. As more men began to work on the plantations, they wanted better conditions and wages. To stop that, growers began to bring in men from Japan in the 1880s. When the Japanese man started to make demands, the United States won the Spanish-American war, taking control of the Philippines. It was now 1898, and Filipino men were imported to work in the sugar fields. Soon Koreans and Portuguese also came to work.

The Japanese man earned money and wrote home, creating matches with "picture brides." Japanese women came to join the men on sugar plantations. As they worked, they would sing songs just as the slaves did in the fields. Even though the workers in Hawaii were not enslaved, they still had a very hard life. Hawaiian sugar growers kept wages low by keeping up competition between cultures. By the time Hawaii became a state in 1959, it was very multicultural. Sugar in Hawaii bridged the East and the West.

Part IV

Part IV Summary and Analysis

Back to Our Stories: New Workers, New Sugar - a New System

In British India in the 1870s, a person could be at a fair when a stranger would come up to them and ask if they wanted to make better wages. If they agreed, the stranger would walk away with them. By the time the person realized that they didn't really know where they were going or what they would be expected to do, they were caught. It was how people got others to work in the fields. If the person tried to get away, the stranger might tell them that they owed for the meals they had been given on the journey. The person would have to go to work since he didn't have any money. Indenture was the new way to get people to work in the sugar fields, particularly in India.

Crossing the Black Water - India was an extremely poor country, filled with famine and drought. It was a good idea for many of the people to leave home to find work, except for one thing. Traditional Hindus felt that leaving India and traveling on the ocean (called Black Water) was forbidden. If anyone made the journey, they became polluted and impure. They were not allowed to come back to their land or their family.

Recruiters would go inland to find strong people who were hungry and desperate enough to take any job. They did not tell them where they were going. They took the people hundreds of miles away to Calcutta. Once there, the individuals were given clothing, vaccinations, and food in exchange for a five-year contract during which they would be paid yearly wages and would receive a return passage to India.

Slavery or Freedom? The In-Between - Indenture was a stage between slavery and freedom. While workers weren't owned by others, they worked for extremely low wages and still had to please an overseer. The Indians and the Africans resented each other, and plantation owners used the competition between the two groups to keep wages low.

Still, in spite of the hard times, many Indian workers decided to stay in colonies after their contracts ended. They began to run their businesses, and many left the estates and lived in their own houses. The Africans migrated to the cities as well, and a new society emerged.

Reform - In 1896, an orphan from Calcutta named Bechu wrote letters telling the world what was really going on at the sugar plantations. He wrote about methods planters used to get around terms written in the indenture contract. The Indians were supposed to work seven hours each day, and they were supposed to receive a certain fee for each day's work. However, instead of paying daily wages, the planters preferred to pay by the "task." Then, they assigned tasks that took much longer than seven hours. The planters were outraged when this came to light. An investigation ensued, and deeper truths were beginning to get exposed. The Age of Sugar was ending.



Sugar and Science - In 1747, a German scientist figured out how to make a sweetener out of beets. Napoleon realized how much cheaper this would be and invested in beets. By 1814, there were over 300 factories in France turning beets into sugar.

Serfs and Sweetness - The serfs in Russia were in a situation that was very similar to the slaves. Russia had a lot of land, but it seemed to be caught in a time warp. Only the richest Russians had sugar. Soon they, too, learned about beet planting and processing.

By 1879, chemists discovered saccharin. There were many ways to satisfy sweet cravings. The end of the Age of Sugar came about when an Indian lawyer in South Africa came forward.

The Lawyer - Mohandas Gandhi saw indenture for what it was. He worked on getting better treatment for Indians.

Sattyagraha - Gandhi encouraged the indentured people to find worth in themselves. He was a promoter of passive resistance. While sugar turned human beings into property, it also was the beginning of changes leading to people rejecting the idea that any individual could be owned by another. This was how sugar changed the world.



Characters

Slaves

These were people who were captured and taken from their homeland. Many came from Africa. They were brought to other lands against their will and forced to do labor for no pay. If a slave didn't do what was expected of them, they were beaten by an overseer.

A slave was a person owned by another person. The slaves on a whole were not educated because they existed only to work. If they tried to run away, they could be killed if they were caught.

When the slaves went to rest, their houses were often cramped, wet, and open to the elements. Most slaves in Louisiana, where conditions were particularly harsh, died before they turned 30.

Indentured

These were people who had life slightly better than slaves, but not much better. An indentured person was a person who made a contract to work for a certain amount of time over a certain number of years for a certain wage in order to pay a debt or in exchange for passage away from their home. Many times people were tricked into working on sugar plantations as indentured workers. By contract the indentured workers were supposed to get paid for daily work. The wage was very low, but people were desperate. Plantation owners often chose to get around the contract by paying by project rather than by day. The projects they assigned took much longer than the seven-hour days in the contract.

Alexander the Great

Alexander the Great wanted to conquer Asia. He built a fleet of 800 ships, and appointed his close friend captain then sent them to investigate India's coast.

Nearchus

Nearchus is the close friend of Alexander the Great who was appointed as captain of a fleet. He stumbled upon a "sweet reed" in his journeys.



Christopher Columbus

Christopher Columbus was an explorer. He was known for his trading, using "white gold" (sugar).

Pedro Cabral

Pedro Cabral tried to sail around Africa to Asia in order to purchase spices for Portugal. The ocean current took him to Brazil instead.

Olaudah Equiano

Olaudah Equiano was an educated slave who wrote about what it was like to arrive in Barbados and to be sold off to the sugar planters.

Thomas Thistlewood

Thomas Thistlewood was an overseer who worked in Jamaica in 1750. He was known for his cruelty.

Mr. Wickham

Mr. Wickham was an Englishman who wrote to his friend in 1615, asking for tea. It was the first time the drink was mentioned by a European.

Catherine of Braganza

In 1662, Catherine of Braganza married Charles II from England, and she made tea drinking popular in English court.

Madame Villeneuve

Madame Villeneuve brought her slave to Paris and left her in a convent as she traveled. She appealed to the court when her slave decided to become a nun.

Pauline

Pauline was a slave who decided to become a nun. The judges ruled in her favor.



Louis XIV

Louis XIV issued a set of rules that defined slavery as legal in the French sugar islands, but in France itself, they were free.

Pierre Lemerre the Young

Back in 1716, 60 years before the Declaration of Independence, Pierre Lemerre the Young declared that all men were equal.

King George III

On March 25, 1807, King George III signed a law banning English involvement in slave trading.

Cechu

Cechu was an orphan who wrote for elite newspapers, exposing the tricks planters used to get around the terms of the indenture contract.

Mohandas Gandhi

Mohandas Gandhi was a lawyer who told the Indians to think of their self-worth. Instead of acting out with violent protest, he taught passive aggression.



Objects/Places

Indus River

Now located in Pakistan, the Indus River is where Alexander the Great's men got tired of fighting. They refused to go on.

Sweet Reed

A close friend of Alexander the Great discovered a sweet reed as he explored. It was a tall stalk that resembled bamboo. The inside was sweet.

New Guinea

Cane sugar can be traced back to New Guinea.

Jundi Shapur

Jundi Shapur was built sometime between 400 and 500 A.D. in the area we now know as Iran. It was the first teaching hospital in the world.

Plantation

Plantation life was a type of farming where large numbers of people worked together to grow, cut, refine, and process sugar cane.

Slaves

Slaves were used to work a plantation. The work was often brutal. The first ones were mostly from Russia and others were from places such as Africa.

Barbados

Many Africans were brought to Barbados to work on plantations as slaves.

Jamaica

Many Africans were brought to Jamaica to work on plantations as slaves.



Great House

The Great House was generally the name for the place where owners of plantations lived. It was usually built on a hill so pleasant, tropical breezes would keep it comfortable.

Factory

Working in factories became very popular in England. Workers took breaks at the same time, and they drank tea with sugar in it to keep their energy up as they returned to work.

Alligator Swamp

The commanders of the richest sugar plantations gathered in an alligator swamp and decided to rise up against white owners.

Saint Domingue

Saint Domingue was the world center for sugar in the late 1700s.

Hawaii

Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Portuguese workers came to work at the sugar plantations in Hawaii. It was a hard life, and while they were paid, their wages were still very low.

India

Many indentured workers came from India. They were poor, starving, and desperate for jobs.



Themes

Sugar and Its Impact on the World

Sugar had a tremendous impact on the world. The plant supplied a solution to the innate sweet craving with which humans seem to be born. When it first came on the market, people used it as a medicine. It was pricey, and only the elite could afford it. After learning how to process sugar cane, the availability and popularity of the substance grew.

With larger amounts of sugar in production, more workers were needed. This drove the slave market. Plantation owners used slaves to work the fields, harvest the crops, and process the sugar.

This raised ethical and moral questions. Was it right to own another human? As Europeans tried to gain independence from their own rulers, they had to also address the idea of owning slaves. There were protests and boycotts; slaves began rising up, and there was bloodshed and brutality on all sides in the struggle for dominance.

Eventually the scientists in the world discovered other ways to make sweeteners. They used beets and made synthetic sugars. With increased availability of sweeteners, there was no longer a need for plantations, slavery, and the brutality that went along with sugar processing.

Working on a Plantation

The people who worked on sugar plantations lived brutal lives. Even very young children were put to work, spending long hours in the field, crouched over and pulling weeds.

Working like a machine, the slaves had to clear the land, plant the crops, keep the crops weeded, find fuel for the fires, keep the fires burning, cut the crops, keep the mill running, feed stalks into the mill, filter the boiling liquids, and sort the crystals. They had to work quickly so the stalks wouldn't become woody, and the heat was intense, even when one wasn't in one of the boiling rooms. The conditions were so hot that the houses had to be wet down so they wouldn't burn.

The workers put in so many hours and were so exhausted, some fell asleep and slipped into the boiling cauldrons. Many women lost limbs because an axe was placed next to the grinding wheel. If a slave fell asleep and was pulled into the wheel, it would crush and kill her. The axe severed the arm to save a life.

When the slaves went to rest, their houses were often cramped, wet, and open to the elements. Most slaves in Louisiana, where conditions were particularly harsh, died



before they turned 30. If a slave didn't do what was expected of them, they were beaten by an overseer.

The Definition of Equality

Equality, and the definition of equality, became a huge issue with slavery. King Louis XIV had issued a set of rules declaring that slavery was legal in the French islands. However, once slaves reached France, they were considered free. It was as if when the French saw the slaves, they suddenly realized that they were human and not just a piece of property.

In 1716, Pierre Lemerre the Younger fought for the rights of slaves stating that all men were equal. Plantation owners didn't want to hear that since they were making a lot of money from the work of the slaves.

Ironically, in America, the colonists were fighting back against England. They felt that they were losing all their rights and didn't want to become slaves. In Europe, the people were rising up against the lords and nobles.

Even as they each fought for their own independence, not wanting to be slaves, they still had no problem with the fact that their country is allowed slavery. The sugar they enjoyed in their foods and drinks were the result of brutal work endured by humans who are owned by others.

Thomas Clarkson wrote an article on the ethics of owning slaves, and it changed him. Becoming the world's first abolitionist, he made it his mission to tell others exactly how their sugar was made. He opened his eyes to the plight of the slaves and encouraged others to act on the premise that all were created equal. His goal was to get rid of slavery.

Style

Perspective

This book was written by two authors who discovered that they both had sugar in their family backgrounds. The husband and wife team researched thoroughly to discover the history of sugar and seek out the voices of those who actually lived the brutal, picture sugar lives. They discovered how sugar changed and connected with world events. Marc has a doctorate in American History from New York University, and Marina is an English professor. This helped them in their research and as they organized their work into a book that could educate and inform readers.

Tone

The prologue of the book was written in first person, connecting the reader to the authors. It showed how history touched their own lives. The main part of the book was written in third person, and it read much like a history book. As it moved through history, it showed how each action and event led to other actions and events. The book was interspersed with personal anecdotes and samples of writings from people who were enslaved as well as those who fought against slavery.

Structure

Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science opened with a Table of Contents that showed how the book was broken up. There was a prologue, written in first person from the authors' points of view. First, it covered Marc's family history then Marina's. It introduced the Age of Honey which was about to give way to the Age of Sugar.

The book was split into four major sections. Each of these sections was broken up into numerous smaller sections. The major sections included: From Magic to Spice, Hell, Freedom, and Back to Our Stories: New Workers, New Sugar. The first section was approximately 20 pages long. The second section was approximately 40 pages long, the third section was approximately 20 pages, and the last section was approximately 10 pages long. Each of the sections included numerous photographs with captions detailing what was going on in the photographs. The middle of the second section highlighted a visual Portrait Gallery of sugar work.

The last section of the main part of the book was followed by a short essay. This section was followed by acknowledgments detailing how the authors researched and wrote the book. It was followed by a timeline, a web guide to color images, Notes and Sources, abbreviations used in the notes, a bibliography, websites, and an index.



Quotes

"The ever-curious Greeks were glad to learn of sugar cane, but it was just one more interesting fact about the natural world, the way a postcard from a summer vacation might list the sights a family has recently seen."

Part I, p. 10

"Maybe after many, many offerings a priest noticed that if the juice of the cane was boiled in the right way, it crystallized into sweet, dark brown clumps."

Part 1, p. 12

"The only way to make a lot of sugar is to engineer a system in which an army of workers swarms through the fields, cuts the cane, and hauls the pile to be crushed into a syrup that flows into the boiling room."

Part 1, p. 27

"Cane sugar was the first product in human history that perfectly satisfied that desire. And the bitter lives of the enslaved Africans produced so much sugar that sugar sweetness began to spread around the world."

Part 2, p. 35

"Sugar supplied the energy, the hint of nutrition, the sweet taste to go with the warmth of tea that even the poorest bitter worker could look forward to. Sugar was a necessity."

Part 2, p. 68

"And indeed, it was when the enslaved Africans began to speak—in words and actions—when Europeans began to see them as human, and the Age of Sugar also became the Age of Freedom."

Part 2, p. 70

"In the Age of Sugar, when slavery was more brutal than ever before, the idea that all humans are equal began to spread—toppling kings, overturning governments, transforming the entire world."

Part 3, p. 72

"When the English looked at the sugar they used every day, Clarkson and the other abolitionists made them see the blood of the slaves who had created it."

Part 3, p. 79

"In a great contest over whether a human, any human, could ever be property, the tide was turning."

Part 3, p. 91



"Underneath the clash over rights, laws, and work rules, there was a deeper truth that the planters were sensing: the Age of Sugar was ending."

Part 4, p. 113

"We all crave sweetness, now more than ever since there are so many ways to satisfy that need."

Part 4, p. 118

"Sugar turned human beings into property, yet sugar led people to reject the idea that any person could be owned by another."

Part 4, p. 125



Topics for Discussion

How was sugar discovered?

How did slavery get connected to sugar?

What was life like for the slaves? Compare and contrast their lives to the plantation owners' lives.

Why didn't the slaves revolt?

Who were the abolitionists, and how did they fight back against slavery?

What was the difference between a slave and an indentured worker?

What brought about the end of the Age of Sugar?