

This year's NHD theme gave me an opportunity to research my topic of interest: the history of food. I was particularly intrigued by sugar, as I learned that it was actually hailed as a medicine in medieval times. The fascinating story of sugar's power throughout history to change the ways of the world made it the topic of my choice for this year's theme.

First, I watched a recorded online lecture by Andrew F. Smith on sugar throughout history. This, as well as the book *Bittersweet* by Peter Macinnis, led me to group the history of sugar production into phases: the Pacific Phase, the Indian Phase, the Islamic Phase, the Mediterranean Phase, and the Atlantic Phase. Sidney W. Mintz's *Sweetness and Power: the Place of Sugar in Modern History* was very informative and gave me better insight into the long-term cultural effects of sugar. Because there are few primary treatises devoted to sugar, my research led me to primary documents that mentioned sugar. These allowed me to take "snapshots" of the sugar industry's role at that period. Using this method, I found an English version of the *Arthashastra*, an ancient Indian text on government; William Fox's essay against slavery; extracts from Christopher Columbus's journal; and other primary documents. I also used secondary books' bibliographies to locate primary sources.

I was fortunate to find Assistant Professor of History Tiffany Trimmer of UW-La Crosse, who specializes in the history of global trade and labor. She gave me valuable insight into the slave trade and migrations that occurred because of the sugar industry.

I think a documentary is specifically able to engage viewers. Sugar and sweetness are often used in artistic imagery. This, combined with the fact that the sugar

industry was tied to the Atlantic slave trade, means that there is an abundance of photographs and paintings of sugar throughout its history. I used these and clips of music from the time periods I describe in my documentary. I also used clips and interviews from the BBC documentary *Addicted to Pleasure: Sugar* and the CBC documentary *The Secrets of Sugar*.

The journey of sugar relates to the theme “Exploration, Encounter, Exchange.” Sugarcane was first encountered by the people of New Guinea, and archaeological evidence shows that it was probably exchanged between groups as they explored Polynesia and the Malay Archipelago. After that, military encounters between Alexander the Great’s exploring army and India led to the Hellenistic people’s desire for sugar through trade exchanges. Later, the Arab empire encountered sugar in Persia, explored technological and agricultural innovations to build a better sugar industry, and facilitated great trade exchanges. In Europe, an increasing number of people encountering sugar led to European empires sending explorers to find places to grow sugar that could be exchanged for wealth and prestige. Slaves from Africa were also exchanged in trade to grow sugar. Exploration into industrial technology led to mass production of sugar. The growth of the sugar industry was facilitated by exploration, encounters, and exchanges in history.