EXPLORERS, TRADERS & Merchants

Tracking the Cultural and Social Impacts of the Global Commodity Trade

A Curriculum Unit for Grades 9 – 12
EXPLORERS, TRADERS & Merchants

TRACKING THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS
OF THE GLOBAL COMMODITY TRADE

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INTRODUCTION

Explorers, Traders & Merchants: Tracking the Cultural and Social Impacts of the Global Commodity Trade is based in part on the 2003 Hemispheres Summer Teachers’ Institute “Explorers, Traders & Merchants: Tracking Cultural Contact through Food.” That four-day workshop examined aspects of cultural contact that have left trace evidence on the food that we eat. In seeking to expand the workshop’s scope as we developed this unit, we have moved beyond looking only at foodstuffs and incorporated a number of other commodities that have had significant global impact.

This unit examines eight global commodities from their points of origin and the social, cultural, political, and economic changes they have wrought along their way. Each case study encompasses four “stops” along the commodity’s journey: its initial discovery and/or access; its progress from local good to international trade; the ramifications of large-scale production; and the drama of its boom-and-bust cycles through the years.

We have sought to address the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and National Geography Standards that cover spatial and cultural diffusion. This unit draws on primary source readings, images, and maps so that students can both track and assess commodities as they have traveled the world. Each case study is laid out in a Document-Based Question (DBQ) format so that students can cite, interpret, and evaluate sources; consider point of view; and use historical evidence to develop and support a thesis.

In addition to responding to specific questions about each commodity, students can compare commodities by placing the following set of questions and their answers into a graphic organizer:

1. What role did ____ play in people’s lives?
2. How were people’s lives affected by ____?
3. To what extent has ____ been harmful or beneficial to society?

Each case study may also be used as a mapping activity in which students can trace on a world map each commodity’s journey from origin to global impact. Toward that end, a blank world map is included on page xiii for you and your students to use.

We have also sought to include images among the primary source documents included in the DBQs. To help your students analyze these images as documents, we have included an image analysis worksheet, which can be found on page xv.

It is our hope that with Explorers, Traders & Merchants students will be able to better appreciate the long-term effects of intercultural contact and population movements by relating them to the presence of various commodities that they see and use every day.

We welcome feedback and comments on the unit and your experience using it in the classroom. Please do not hesitate to contact us at hemispheres@austin.utexas.edu.
STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

This unit is designed to address the following standards in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS):

CULTURE
18) The student understands the ways in which cultures change and maintain continuity.
   The student is expected to:
   A) describe the impact of general processes such as migration, war, trade, independent inventions, and diffusion of ideas and motivations on cultural change.
   (113.34 World Geography Studies)

ECONOMICS
12) The student understands the economic importance of, and issues related to, the location and management of key natural resources.
   The student is expected to:
   A) compare global trade patterns at different periods of time and develop hypotheses to explain changes that have occurred in world trade and the implications of these changes;
   B) analyze how the creation and distribution of resources affects the location and patterns of movement of products, capital, and people.
   (113.34 World Geography Studies)

GEOGRAPHY
6) The student understands the types and patterns of settlement, the factors that affect where people settle, and processes of settlement development over time.
   The student is expected to:
   B) explain the processes that have caused cities to grow such as location along transportation routes, availability of resources that have attracted settlers and economic activities, and continued access to other cities and resources.
   (113.34 World Geography Studies)

HISTORY
1) The student understands how geographic contexts (the geography of places in the past) and processes of spatial exchange (diffusion) influenced events in the past and helped to shape the present.
   The student is expected to:
   B) trace the spatial diffusion of a phenomenon and describe its effects on regions of contact such as the spread of bubonic plague, the diffusion and exchange of foods between the New and Old Worlds, or the diffusion of American slang.
   (113.34 World Geography Studies)

5) The student understands causes and effects of European expansion beginning in the 16th century.
   The student is expected to:
   A) identify causes of European expansion beginning in the 16th century; and
   B) explain the political, economic, cultural, and technological influences of European expansion on both Europeans and non-Europeans, beginning in the 16th century.
   (113.33 World History Studies)
National Geography Standards Alignment

This unit addresses the following standards in the National Geography Standards:

Standard 5: Places and Regions: That People Create Regions to Interpret Earth’s Complexity
   By the end of the eighth grade, the student knows and understands:
   3. The connections among regions

   By the end of the eighth grade, the student knows and understands:
   3. The types and historical patterns of human migration
   4. The effects of migration on the characteristics of places

Standard 11: Human Systems: The Patterns and Networks of Economic Interdependence on Earth’s Surface
   By the end of the eighth grade, the student knows and understands:
   2. The basis for global interdependence
   3. Reasons for the spatial patterns of economic activities
   4. How changes in technology, transportation, and communication affect the location of economic activities

Standard 16: Environment and Society: The Changes that Occur in the Meaning, Use, Distribution, and Importance of Resources
   By the end of the eighth grade, the student knows and understands:
   1. The worldwide distribution and use of resources
   2. Why people have different viewpoints regarding resource use
A. Observations
Study the image for 2 minutes. First, consider any written information that accompanies the image (including title, date, source, comments). Next, form an overall impression of the image and then examine individual items in the image. Divide the image into four sections and study each to see what new details become visible. Use the chart below to write down your observations. List people, objects, and activities in the image.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PEOPLE</th>
<th>OBJECTS</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Deductions
Based on your observations above, list three things you might deduce from this image.

1.

2.

3.

C. Questions
What questions does this image raise in your mind? List two.

1.

2.

How might you go about finding answers to your questions?
Caviar
From Elite Treat
to Marketing Magic
INTRODUCTION

Caviar is a delicacy savored the world over. While caviar is, crudely speaking, fish eggs, only the roe of the sturgeon can be sold as “caviar.” The roe of any other fish must be described using the name of the fish it comes from (such as “paddlefish caviar”).

There are twenty-seven different types of sturgeon, but the caviar of the beluga—the largest species, found only in the Caspian Sea—is the most famous. The large dark eggs have been the delight of Tsars through the ages, but Russians were not the first to process fish eggs. Writings from the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Persians all mention of caviar.

Source 1: Illustration of a sturgeon


Source 2: Journalist Inga Saffron describes the life cycle of sturgeon in an interview, 2002

Sturgeon are an anadromous fish, which means they live in the seas, and commute up freshwater rivers to spawn. Sturgeon are born in rivers: in the Volga River, or the Ural River, or the Delaware River or the Sacramento River. After the female lays her eggs, they are fertilized by the male sturgeon with milt. Tiny inch-long fingerlings are born within a few hours. Those fingerlings make their way down the river into the sea, where they live until they grow up. When the fish are mature, and it takes quite a while for them to mature, they start the whole trip back up the river. They are famous for trying to spawn in the spot where they were born, repeating the cycle of their parents.

One of the reasons the sturgeon is in so much trouble now is, unlike most fish, they take quite a long time to mature. Beluga can take 20 years before sexual maturity. Even some of the smaller sturgeon take six to 10 years to reach adulthood and lay their eggs. When they finally mature, they go up the river.


Comprehension Exercise:

1. Why does Inga Saffron mention the sturgeon’s late maturity as a reason they are “in so much trouble now”? How might the sturgeon’s life cycle affect future populations of sturgeon?
SECTION 1: A COMMON RUSSIAN DELICACY

Source 1: Merchant Jonas Hanway describes caviar preparation on the Volga River, 1753

Besides the vast abundance of fish taken in this river, and sent either salted or frozen to distant parts of the Russian empire, there is a considerable commerce carried on in caviare.

The method of preparing this commodity is to take away the stringy part; then to mix it with salt well cleaned and made into brine; when it is drained from the oily parts and pressed, it becomes of such a consistency as to keep two or three years. The grain is of a darkish grey colour, almost as big as a peppercorn, and cuts transparent. In the winter it is sent fresh to all parts of the empire, and is much esteemed by the natives as well as foreigners, being well known to partake of the nature of oysters. There is also a large quantity made for exportation, which is consumed in Italy and by the Christians in the Levant. The Armenians have the skill of preparing it best, and usually make above six thousand poods [about 100 tons] every year. In 1749 they brought twenty thousand poods to market.

Jonas Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade Over the Caspian Sea* (1753), 94.

Source 2: French novelist Alexandre Dumas describes a method for transporting live fish, 1860

The method that Dumas describes for transporting sterlet also applied to sturgeon, as caviar spoils quickly. While caviar can be preserved with salt, fresh caviar is the most highly regarded.

The sterlet is found in certain rivers, chiefly the Volga and the Oka, and can live only in its native waters. The problem is to bring it, alive, the four or five hundred miles to St. Petersburg. (If it arrives dead, it is useless.) In summer there is no special difficulty. The fish travels in a tank of river water, shaded from the sun, extra supplies of the same water being carried in specially cooled jars. But in winter, with 30 degrees of frost, it’s a very different matter, calling for a little furnace operated by a skilled man, to maintain the water always at the right temperature.

In the old days, before railways, great Russian lords kept special trucks, equipped with fish-tanks and slow oven, to bring sterlet to St. Petersburg, for custom demands that the host shall show his guests the fish, alive and swimming, that, a quarter of an hour later, they will enjoy as soup.


Source 3: Literary description of a celebration at the home of a Russian village Police Chief, 1842

While the guests were settling down to a game of cards, there appeared on the table in the adjoining room big helpings of white sturgeon, salmon, pressed and fresh caviar, herring, an assortment of cheeses, smoked tongue, and more sturgeon of a different variety, all with the compliments of the food store. Then additional dishes, the contribution of the host’s kitchen, appeared: a fish-head pie into which had gone the trimmings of a three-hundred-pound sturgeon, another pie containing mushrooms, and then tarts, turnovers, and fritters.

A Common Russian Delicacy

Source 4: Description of pressed caviar
*Pressed caviar is a less fragile and less expensive form of caviar that has been popular since the nineteenth century.*

One can also find *payusnaya* caviar, highly regarded in Russia, though less appreciated in the West. This pressed caviar is made from damaged eggs, which are crushed to form a rather sticky paste that is quite strong in flavor. *Payusnaya* caviar traditionally served as soldiers’ rations during their long stints at the front, as it is much less perishable and consequently less expensive than the fresh caviar.


Source 5: Chart detailing the value of merchandise for sale at the annual market fair, Nizhni Novgorod, 1841
*The Nizhni Novgorod market fair was an annual month-long summer event where Russian, European, and Asiatic products and merchandise were bought and sold.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>For Sale</th>
<th>Sold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cottons</td>
<td>7,366,665</td>
<td>5,947,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woollens</td>
<td>3,448,275</td>
<td>2,620,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linens and hempen cloths</td>
<td>3,126,736</td>
<td>2,375,736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silks</td>
<td>3,220,489</td>
<td>2,239,789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furs</td>
<td>1,996,273</td>
<td>1,498,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hides, leather tanned and manufactured</td>
<td>1,043,583</td>
<td>876,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce of mines and forges; iron, copper, hard-wares, jewellery, &amp;c.</td>
<td>7,600,330</td>
<td>6,450,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porcelain, earthenware, glass, and mirrors</td>
<td>398,860</td>
<td>336,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried fish, caviar, fish oil, and glue</td>
<td>513,775</td>
<td>473,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat and flour</td>
<td>2,860,750</td>
<td>1,645,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wines of Russian growth, brandy, hydromel, &amp;c.</td>
<td>866,786</td>
<td>781,386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar from the refiners of St. Petersburg and Archangel (137,000 pounds), and other merchandise, such as wax, candles, potash, soap, tobacco, paper, pens, &amp;c.</td>
<td>4,730,148</td>
<td>4,616,748</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Russian produce and manufactures | 37,132,693| 29,762,473|

Increase in sales of Russian merchandise in 1841 over 1840 | 2,479,968| 2,479,968|


Comprehension Exercises:
1. Based on these documents, do you think caviar was a special food or an everyday food for Russians? What factors made caviar more common among some Russians?  
2. What methods were used to overcome the fragility of caviar?  
3. With caviar so valuable a product, why do you think it did not represent a greater percentage of Russia’s export commodities? Support your answer citing the sources.
Source 6: Description of caviar by Bartolomeo Scappi, personal cook to Pope Pius V, 1570

Caviar is made from sturgeon’s eggs and is brought from Alexandria and from places in the Black Sea by merchants who pack it in kegs. It is served on hot toasted slices of bread with an eggplant sauce and capsicum.


Source 7: King Louis XV of France first tastes caviar, mid 1700s

Offered a taste by an emissary of Peter the Great, the French king was so repulsed that he spat the contents on the elegant carpet of the Versailles palace. … A few years later, in 1741, Savary’s *Dictionnaire du Commerce* nevertheless attempted to promote caviar with this back-handed praise: “It is beginning to be known in France where it is not despised at the best tables.”


Source 8: English Law establishing sturgeon as a royal fish, 1765–1769

X. A TENTH branch of the king’s ordinary revenue, said to be grounded on the consideration of his guarding and protecting the seas from pirates and robbers, is the right to royal fish, which are whale and sturgeon: and these, when either thrown ashore, or caught near the coasts, are the property of the king, on account of their superior excellence. Indeed our ancestors seem to have entertained a very high notion of the importance of this right; it being the prerogative of the kings of Denmark and the dukes of Normandy; and from one of these it was probably derived to our princes. It is expressly claimed and allowed in the *statute de praerogativa regis*; and the most ancient treatises of law now extant make mention if it; though they seem to have made distinction between whale and sturgeon.


Source 9: Europe responds to reports of plague in Russia, 1878–1879

In late 1878, reports of plague began to emerge from a village on the Volga River. This news frightened Europe as word spread and European nations began to take action to protect themselves from the contagion of this fatal disease, the cause of which no one knew.

On January 19, 1879, the German Ministry of Health forbade the importation of a wide variety of Russian goods, established a twenty-day quarantine for travelers from suspicious areas, and promised to dispatch German doctors to the plague-stricken region. …

By the end of January the real and artificially sponsored alarm in Berlin had turned the subject of the plague into the prime topic of conversation. Some even shrank from eating caviar, lest they catch the deadly disease, although this deprivation hardly affected the mass of Germans.

A German-Austrian agreement prohibited the importation of linen cloths, rags, furs, skins, leather, hair bristles, feathers, caviar, fish, Sarepta balsam, felt, and wastepaper.

Comprehension Exercises:

4. How common was caviar among western Europeans? Based on these documents, do you think caviar was a special food or an everyday food for Europeans? How might the ban on caviar have impacted the common man’s impression of it?

5. How might trade restrictions affect the future price of caviar? The German import ban was not just on caviar, but on many other products as well. Would those products, such as linen cloths and leather, also be affected in the future? What factors might differentiate the European response to different products and commodities?

6. How would the sturgeon’s status as a “royal fish” affect the common Englishman’s access to caviar?
SECTION 2: CRISIS IN THE CASPIAN

The Caspian Sea is the largest inland lake in the world, covering more than 386,000 sq. kilometers. It is one of the richest fisheries in the world and the source of the three most sought-after types of caviar: beluga, osetra, and sevruga. The beluga sturgeon is the largest—individuals can be four to six meters long and can weigh up to one thousand kg. Beluga caviar is a grey/black color. The osetra, on average, is about two meters long and can weigh sixty to one hundred kg. Osetra caviar ranges in color from grey to brown. The sevruga is much smaller, about one meter in length, and can weigh fifteen to twenty kg. Caviar from the sevruga is grey/black in color.

The Caspian is fed by more than 120 small rivers, but just five rivers provide 90 percent of the freshwater inflow. Of these, the Volga River is by far the largest.

Source 1: Lady Mary Leonora Woulfe Sheil, wife of a British diplomat, describes Caspian fisheries, 1856

Sturgeon and salmon are caught in immense quantities on these coasts; the fisheries of the sturgeon are in the hands of Russians, who rent them from the Persian Government. Having no scales, visible at least, this fish is valueless as an article of food to Persians. The best caviare is said to be obtained in the Caspian.


Source 2: Russian Stamp, 1959

This postage stamp shows an osetra sturgeon with a map of its habitats in Russia and the statement “Save the osetra, most valuable fish of our homeland.”


Comprehension Exercises:
1. What do you think happened in the Caspian region during the one hundred years between the description of Caspian fisheries and the declaration that sturgeon must be “saved”?
2. What does Lady Mary Leonora Woulfe Sheil mean when she says that sturgeon is “valueless as an article of food to Persians”? Do research to ascertain the religious restrictions on scaleless fish (hint: Jews and Shi’ite Muslims observe the same restrictions).
Comprehension Exercise:

3. How many countries border the Caspian Sea? Note the industries that surround and affect the rivers and sea.

4. What impact do you think this has had on the sturgeon catch in this region?
Source 4: United Nations statistics indicating trends in catch of *Acipenseriform* fish (sturgeon and paddlefish) since 1950

Comprehension Exercises:

5. What has happened to the catch of sturgeon since 1988? What factors might have contributed to this?

6. Why are there more countries involved in sturgeon catch since 1988 (what happened in 1990 that affected the region)?

7. On a world map, color the countries that are the main sturgeon harvesters.
Crisis in the Caspian

Since 1998, CITES has required that sturgeon and sturgeon products, such as caviar, have a permit. CITES sets an annual limit on the amount of such products that can be sold internationally.


The publication of 2007 quotas contrasts with the situation in 2006, when the Secretariat did not publish caviar quotas for the Caspian Sea’s sturgeon fisheries because the five States concerned—Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan—did not provide sufficient information about the sustainability of their sturgeon catch. Recognizing that sturgeon stocks have declined in recent years, the States bordering the Caspian Sea agreed amongst themselves to reduce the combined catch quotas for the Sea’s six sturgeon species by an average of 20% compared with 2005, with reductions of one third for some species.


Source 6: U.S. airport display, 2007

Comprehension Exercises:
8. CITES sets quotas for the amount of fish that can be caught by any one country. What methods can CITES apply to enforce these rules? Does CITES have any control/authority over domestic sale/purchase of caviar?
9. How might restrictions on sturgeon catch and caviar export affect the price of a jar of caviar?
COMPANY PRESIDENT PLEADS GUILTY TO CAVIAR SMUGGLING CONSPIRACY
Miami Ring Used Paid Couriers To Smuggle Caviar In Suitcases

The Department of Justice announced today that Mariusz Chomicz, the President of a caviar company in Poland, pled guilty and was sentenced to 30 months in prison for his part in a caviar smuggling conspiracy. The conspiracy ring used paid couriers to smuggle suitcases filled with caviar into the United States after new international restrictions were announced in 1998 to protect sturgeon.

“Caspian Sea sturgeon are a species of pre-historic origin which are likely to be wiped out by the greed of smugglers and those willing to buy from them,” said Tom Sansonetti, Assistant Attorney General of the Justice Department’s Environment and Natural Resources Division. “Recent prosecutions have shown that the caviar trade is plagued by criminal activity which will result in the inevitable collapse of sturgeon populations absent vigorous enforcement. The Justice Department is dedicated to enforcing the laws designed to protect and preserve sturgeon and other protected wildlife from the threat of extinction.”

“Wildlife smuggling is a vice that will not be tolerated in Miami,” said Marcos Daniel Jiménez, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida. “We are committed to vigorously prosecuting those who place the prospect of profits before environmental concerns and violate wildlife laws.”

Chomicz, 29, a Polish national, was sentenced in a late afternoon hearing yesterday before U.S. District Court Judge Joan A. Lenard. The prosecution of Chomicz is the tenth criminal case to be brought in the Southern District of Florida relating to caviar smuggling over the past three years. The individuals previously convicted in Miami have all received prison sentences.

In 2004, the president of Azerbaijan reported that the average salary in Azerbaijan was “approaching $100” per month.

When a south wind blows from the Caspian Sea towards the coastal village of Hovsan, 32 kilometers (20 miles) east of the Azerbaijani capital of Baku, hundreds of dead fish are washed ashore.

The fish are the victims of illegal poachers and indiscriminate methods of killing their prey that are threatening stocks of sturgeon, an endangered species and the most precious resource of the Caspian.

The ordinary fishermen say that for the last 10 years poachers have been catching fish on this spot, mostly unhindered and using dynamite or homemade explosives made of fertilizers. They go out fishing in motorboats either early in the morning or late at night.

Fishing is one of the most lucrative businesses in modern day Azerbaijan. On the black market, a kilo of fresh sturgeon can be bought for 10 manats (US$12) while a kilo of black caviar costs around 120 manats (US$140). Overseas, these prices can be dozens of times higher.

International alarm about a steep decline in sturgeon stocks prompted the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, CITES, to halt exports of Beluga caviar from the Caspian Sea in 2006.


Comprehension Exercises:
10. How might economic forces contribute to the problem of sturgeon poaching?
11. How are individual fishermen affected by the CITES quotas, as compared to large fishing fleets?
12. Source 7 mentions that ten smuggling cases have been prosecuted in Florida. What effect have airport restrictions had on smugglers?
SECTION 3: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE ATLANTIC STURGEON TRADE

Before the advent of canning, few non-elite Europeans had tasted caviar. Although the rivers of North America were teeming with sturgeon, explorers and colonists made little use of them for food. Fish products were commonly used as fertilizer, and had other non-food uses such as oil for lamps.

Source 1: Report by Henry Hudson to the British East India Company on his North American expedition, 1609

There are plenty of sturgeon which the Christians do not make use of, but the Indians eat them greedily.


Source 2: Excerpt from a report by Captain John Smith, Virginia Colony, 1612

“In somer [summer] no place affordeth more plenty of Sturgeon, nor in winter more abundance of fowle, especially in the time of frost. There was once (1607–9) taken 52 Sturgeons at a draught, at another draught 68. From the later end of May till the end of June are taken few, but yong Sturgeon of 2 foot or a yard long. From thence till the midst of September them of 2 or 3 yards long and fewe others. And in 4 or 5 hours with one nette were ordinarily taken 7 or 8: often more, seldom lesse. In the small rivers all the yeare there is a good plenty of small fish, so that with hookes those that would take paines had sufficient.”


Source 3: Written report by Sir Augustus John Foster, British representative to Washington, describing the response of American congressmen to caviar, 1804–1812

Plenty of sturgeon are caught at the little falls of the Potomac a short distance above George Town where the river becomes narrow and the scenery is very romantic; such abundance was there indeed of this fish that I determined to try if the roe might not be cured so as to afford caviar and my maitre d’hotel having nothing to do in the summer, I gave him a receipt out of Chambers Dictionary for the purpose which he so successfully followed that I had some excellent Caviar for the following winter but on its being served to the members of Congress, the precaution of telling them to taste a little first not having been observed they took such quantities thinking it was black raspberry Jam that the stock was soon exhausted and very few of them liked it but spit it out very unceremoniously as a thing excessively nasty. Nevertheless it had met the approbation of some of the gentlemen of the Russian legation and I trust that the manufacture of it being thus introduced into the country it may by degrees become an object of consumption and even of exportation. …


Comprehension Exercises:
1. With so much sturgeon available in the New World, why is there so little mention of caviar?
2. What was the general attitude of early Americans to caviar?
3. Based on the readings in the previous sections, what factors might have affected early Americans’ access to and consumption of caviar?
In the mid-1800s, European merchants, looking for a new, less-expensive source of caviar, turned to America. By the late 1870’s the newly perfected process for canning caviar in glass jars motivated American fisheries to stop throwing away roe as “worthless” and to package and export caviar to Europe. Caviar for export rapidly increased in price, stimulating an ever-greater sturgeon catch. The best caviar was sent to Europe, while “surplus” remained in America. New York bartenders offered salty caviar sandwiches to encourage more drinking (much as salty peanuts are served today). This caviar enthusiasm continued to the point of overfishing in North American waters.

Source 4: Description of the status of the Atlantic sturgeon trade, 1915

Like many other fishery products which later came to have large commercial value, the sturgeon were once looked upon in many localities as utterly worthless, and often, when they became entangled in fishermen’s nets, they were wantonly killed and thrown back into the water. … Processes of preparing the roe for caviar were soon perfected, however, and by 1880 the sturgeon fishery was well developed. The great demand for caviar in Europe stimulated the fishery and the sturgeon soon rose from a position of worthlessness to one of extremely high value. Caviar mounted in price from about $10 a ked in 1885 to $40 ked in 1894. This rapid increase in price gave the sturgeon fishery prominence, but reckless fishing soon brought about a rapid decline. … In some rivers which once supported a valuable fishery the sturgeon is entirely exterminated, and in all sections the catch has steadily diminished. … Under present conditions the sturgeon fishery as a commercial enterprise will soon disappear, and the fish itself will probably be practically extinct within a few years.


Source 5: News article on fraud in caviar imports, 1900

… [S]even-eighths of the caviar sold in this country as Russian caviar is made a few miles below this city from eggs of the sturgeon caught in this vicinity. … To show how rapidly the sturgeon are passing away it is only necessary to refer to the report of the Pennsylvania Fish Commission.

The Daily Herald, August 11, 1900.

Source 6: Chart of the paddlefish catch in the lower Mississippi River, 1899–1917

Around 1896 fishermen along the lower Mississippi began to make caviar from paddlefish roe. Once they were able to export caviar without spoilage, they increased their catch.

In 1894 paddlefish catch in Mississippi = 1,000,000 pounds valued at about $21,000.
1899 catch 2,473,000 pounds, valued at $55,514
1908 catch 1,500,000 pounds valued at $49,000
1914 catch 9,000 pounds (value not specified)
1917 catch 3,000 pounds (value not specified)

Comprehension Exercises:

4. What was the attitude of early Americans toward caviar and sturgeon? How might immigration have affected this attitude?

5. How did fishing practices and environmental factors affect the sturgeon catch in North America?

6. How do you think the impact of American caviar might have affected the caviar industry in Russia and Iran? Cite evidence from readings in this section.
Source 7: Description of the decline of sturgeon populations in the early 1900s.

By 1925, factory and sewage pollution coupled with over fishing caused the sturgeon and caviar industry on the Delaware to diminish. In 1904, the Sturgeon Fishermen’s Protective Association discussed passage of a law forbidding the landing of any sturgeon under 4 feet, since fish this size are of little value as a source of caviar. State laws were eventually passed but not before most of the sturgeon in the Delaware Bay had disappeared.


Source 8: Abandoned sturgeon docks at Caviar/Bayside, New Jersey, ca. 1930


Source 9: Excerpt from “Old Timers,” poem describing Port Bruce, Ontario, in 1896

On one side of the fish house, row on row,
Were kegs and cases of sturgeon roe,
The public hadn’t acquired the expensive taste
That now is featured in caviar paste.
The sturgeon are gone and so is the roe
And the exciting days of long ago.
And the rough, kindly, friendly fisher folk
Who chewed tobacco and spit at my feet as a joke.


Comprehension Exercises:

7. How did the decline in sturgeon catch affect the lives of fishermen along the Atlantic coast?

8. According to the sources in the previous sections, caviar was a delicacy in Europe for hundreds of years before overfishing reduced the sturgeon population in the Caspian Sea. Why did sturgeon and paddlefish populations decline so rapidly in American waters? Explain your answer citing texts in this section.
Source 10: Nazi Minister of Armanents, Albert Speer, recalling Hitler’s taste for caviar

For a few weeks, Hitler actually ate caviar by the spoonful with gusto, and praised the taste, which was new to him. But then he asked Kannenberg [the house steward] about the price, was horrified, and gave strict orders against having that again. Thereupon, the cheaper red caviar was served him. But that too was rejected as an extravagance. To be sure, these expenses were insignificant in comparison with the total outlay for the Chancellor’s household. But the idea of a caviar-eating Leader was incompatible with Hitler’s conception of himself.


Source 11: American film actress Marilyn Monroe describing fame

Fame is not really for a daily diet, that’s not what fulfills you. It warms you a bit but the warming is temporary. It’s like caviar, you know—it’s good to have caviar but not when you have it every meal every day.


Comprehension Exercises:

9. What do the above quotations imply about the perceived status of people who eat caviar? What sort of self-image is reflected in these comments?

10. How have American attitudes toward caviar changed over time? Consider factors that might account for differences and changes in attitudes. Explain your answer citing readings in this and previous sections.
Source 12: Label of a can of Canine Caviar pet food, 2007

![Canine Caviar pet food label](image)

Discover a line of pet foods so premium they will meet the needs of every animal, no matter what the breed. These diets are leading the way in the pet food industry’s search for the perfect pet food with its naturally preserved allergen-free food.


**Comprehension Exercises:**

11. Canine Caviar products do not actually contain caviar. What is the company saying about its product by naming it “caviar”?

12. Is this a legitimate method of advertising?
The Marketing and Politics of a Banned Luxury

The taste for caviar has expanded even as the supply has contracted. This has led to a search for roe that can satisfy the public’s continuing demand.

Source 1: Texas from an advertisement by Deluga Caviar, 2007

“Protecting the Environment”
Five years ago, our company, Deluga Caviar, Inc, recognized that Beluga Sturgeon was being over fished and on the verge of extinction. We immediately set out to create Deluga Caviar, a substitute for Beluga Caviar with the look, texture, and taste of Beluga, at a fraction of the cost. Our caviar is an all natural product with no preservatives, made with legally imported roe of a fresh water European fish carefully blended with top quality caviar essence.


LOUISVILLE, Ky., July 19—
While caviar might go with canapés, it does not usually go with y’all.

But tell that to Lewis Shuckman.

A plucky, compact vendor of fish, Mr. Shuckman spent years peddling southern paddlefish roe from his seafood shop in Louisville, knocking on doors of fancy restaurants and country clubs, asking anyone who would listen, “Y’all want some caviar?”

Noses were turned up, he says, and chef after chef dismissed his product as a far cry from “the gray pearls” of the Caspian Sea and just the eggs of some toothless, goofy-looking creature that swam the Mississippi.

But then things changed. Markedly. Pollution, over-fishing and corruption ravaged the once bountiful stocks of Caspian Sea sturgeon, mothers of famed sevruga, osetra and beluga caviar, a salty jam sometimes costing as much as $100 a spoonful. A recent Iranian report said 140 million prized sturgeon had disappeared.

Now, Mr. Shuckman and his paddlefish eggs are the toast of homegrown caviar aficionados, an industry growing as fast as a well-fed fingerling. Ten years ago, domestic caviar accounted for a sliver of American consumption. Today, some seafood experts say, the cheaper (though mushier) roe feeds 60 percent of the market.

The chef Wolfgang Puck calls the paddlefish eggs “the Chevrolet of caviar.”

Source 3: Caviar vending machine, Moscow, 2005

This vending machine contains salmon caviar, as indicated by the bright orange eggs.


Source 4: RIA news article about the introduction of caviar vending machines in Moscow, 2005

Moscow took another step Friday toward justifying its reputation as one of the world’s most expensive cities by installing a vending machine dispensing one of the country’s best-loved delicacies: caviar.

In a move that seems to reflect the country’s new-found riches and makes Coke machines look almost proletarian in comparison, the dispenser, known locally as an “ikromat” from the Russian word for caviar “ikra,” has been set up in a City Hall building on the New Arbat, a street now better known for its casinos than as the home of the House of Books.

True, the goods on offer are not top of the range Beluga, but the highly popular red [salmon] caviar should be a hit with the local employees in the run-up to New Year’s Eve, the country’s main holiday.

A representative of the company behind the vending machine ... only said they [caviar sold in the vending machine] would be expensive.

“After all, it [caviar] is not coffee,” the representative said.

In fact, the “ikromat” is far more of a technical challenge than your average instant coffee machine. The temperature, for one, has to be maintained at a steady 5 degrees Celsius, otherwise the produce will spoil. And nobody would want the New Year’s celebrations to be ruined because of that.

But unlike coffee machines and soft drinks dispensers, caviar is unlikely to appear any time soon at a gymnasium or a movie theater near you. “We would have to put a guard to them,” the company representative said.

Comprehension Exercises:

1. What does Wolfgang Puck mean when he calls paddlefish eggs “the Chevrolet of caviar”?

2. How are new advertising strategies affecting the market for caviar?

3. The vending machines in the above source sell salmon caviar, a less expensive type of roe. Do you think that making caviar available in a vending machine will make it more accessible to the general public? What other factors might influence the sale of salmon caviar?
The Marketing and Politics of a Banned Luxury

Source 5: News article on a World Wildlife Fund survey of Russian attitudes toward caviar, October 9, 2007

Russians only let the price, not the threat of extinction, come between them and caviar, a survey by the global conservation organization WWF said on Monday.

Russians are consuming less of the prized delicacy compared with a couple years ago, but only because the price of the tiny black sturgeon roe has increased, it said.

Rising prices discouraged 68 percent of respondents from buying caviar, the WWF survey said, while only 4 percent cited the collapse of Caspian Sea sturgeon stocks as a factor in the decline.

“We found that our countrymen don’t think of the environment when they eat caviar, but the rising prices are making people buy less and less,” WWF’s Moscow spokeswoman Darya Kudryavtseva said.

WWF estimates that 9/10 of all black caviar—the most expensive kind—have been taken illegally from the waters.

“People are ready to buy illegal caviar. The fate of sturgeon and the legality of caviar is of little concern to Russians,” she said.

Last month Russian police seized almost half a ton of contraband caviar worth an estimated $600,000 as it was being smuggled through a military airfield in black rubbish bags, the interior ministry said at the time.

Overfishing, poaching, pollution, poor management and corrupt law enforcement agencies have cut sturgeon stocks severely, environmental groups have said.

Caviar can be extracted from various species of fish, though in Russia most come from sturgeon. It is usually served lightly salted as either a snack or a light meal, and often comes accompanied by pancakes.

Caviar from the rare beluga sturgeon costs about $1,800 per kg in Moscow markets, versus 3,700 British pounds ($7,499) in London, though other types cost less.

The United States increasingly relies on its former enemy Russia to provide a stable supply of oil at a time when we prefer to do less business with nasty Islamic regimes such as Iran. But when it comes to another expensive, oozy black substance packaged in metal containers, the U.S. government is suggesting that we rely less on Russia, which has historically provided a stable supply, and more on a charter member of the Axis of Evil.


**Comprehension Exercise:**

4. What do the sources suggest about what happens when politics and economics clash?
**Graphic Organizer I**

Fill in the following chart for each stop along caviar’s progress from hidden Caspian delicacy to contraband. How did it move from one stop to the next?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How was it used?</th>
<th>When did it arrive?</th>
<th>With whom did it arrive?</th>
<th>Where is caviar found?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) A Common Russian Delicacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Crisis in the Caspian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) The Rise and Fall of the Atlantic Sturgeon Trade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) The Marketing and Politics of a Banned Luxury</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**GRAPHIC ORGANIZER 2**

Fill in the following chart for each stop along caviar’s progress from hidden Caspian delicacy to contraband.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1) A Common Russian Delicacy</th>
<th>(2) Crisis in the Caspian</th>
<th>(3) The Rise and Fall of the Atlantic Sturgeon Trade</th>
<th>(4) The Marketing and Politics of a Banned Luxury</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent has caviar been harmful or beneficial to society?</td>
<td>How were people’s lives affected by caviar?</td>
<td>What role did caviar play in people’s lives?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
About Hemispheres

Created in 1996, Hemispheres is the international outreach consortium at the University of Texas at Austin. Hemispheres utilizes University resources to promote and assist with world studies education for K–12 and postsecondary schools, businesses, civic and non-profit organizations, the media, governmental agencies, and the general public.

Comprised of UT’s four federally funded National Resource Centers (NRCs) dedicated to the study and teaching of Latin America; the Middle East; Russia, East Europe & Eurasia; and South Asia, Hemispheres offers a variety of free and low-cost services to these groups and more. Each center coordinates its own outreach programming, including management of its lending library, speakers bureau, public lectures, and conferences, all of which are reinforced by collaborative promotion of our resources to an ever-widening audience in the educational community and beyond.

Hemispheres fulfills its mission through: coordination of pre-service and in-service training and resource workshops for educators; promotion of outreach resources and activities via exhibits at appropriate state- and nation-wide educator conferences; participation in public outreach events as organized by the consortium as well as by other organizations; and consultation on appropriate methods for implementing world studies content in school, business, and community initiatives.

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