Assignment 1

Your summer assignment is based on the book, *A History of the World in 6 Glasses*, by Tom Standage. The author looks at the development of world civilizations through the prism of the beverages that people drank in various time periods. These are (in chronological order): beer, wine, spirits, coffee, tea and Coca-Cola. The purpose in reading the book is to get a sense of how civilizations and cultures develop and how numerous forces (social, political, religious, ideologies, technological, economic, & ecological) all affect even the most mundane-seeming aspects of people’s daily lives. When you are drinking a coke on a hot day this summer, it is not an accident. There are historical forces at work that have put that can of coke in your hand. This book explores those forces. For this assignment, you will need to read the book and do the following tasks.

**Part 1:** Summary for each of the six beverages, and for the epilogue, write a 1 page summary of the author’s main points. Explain when, where, why and how that beverage became important and what effect it had on world history. Give specific examples of how the beverage affected history. Cite when necessary. Ex.(p.35).

**Part 2:** Questions Answer the following questions in a paragraph of 4-8 sentences for each question.

**BEER:** “In both cultures (Egypt and Mesopotamia), beer was a staple foodstuff without which no meal was complete. It was consumed by everyone, rich and poor, men and women, adults and children, from the top of the social pyramid to the bottom. It was truly defining drink of these first great civilizations.” (pg. 30)

1. How might beer have influenced the transition from hunting and gathering to agricultural based societies?
2. How is the discovery of beer linked to the growth of the first “civilizations”?
3. What does this history of beer in the ancient world tell us about the early civilizations?
4. What sources does the author use to gather his information on the use of beer?
5. What were some of the uses of beer by ancient cultures? Nourishment? Ritual? Religious?
6. How did beer “civilize” man, according to Standage?
7. What is the relationship between beer and writing, commerce, and health?

**WINE:** Thucydides: “the peoples of the Mediterranean began to emerge from barbarism when they learned to cultivate the olive and the vine.” (pg. 52-53)

8. What opportunities associated with wine drinking did men have in ancient Greece that women did not?
9. Why was wine adopted as a ritual drink in Christianity, Islam prohibited the use of alcohol?
10. What role did wine play at the symposion?
11. What was a convivium and how did it reflect social status?
12. Why do Christians drink wine and Muslims do not?

**SPIRITS:** “Rum was the liquid embodiment of both the triumph and the oppression of the first era of globalization.” (pg. 111)

13. From which advanced civilization/culture did Europeans get the „science“ of how to make spirits?
14. In what ways was the „discovery“ and use of distillation important to the rebirth of science in Europe? (How was distillation seen and which infant science did it go hand in hand with, thus probably leading to further work/discovery? Also look what sort of texts had to be translated and what that might have led to...)
15. How did spirits advance/accelerate colonialism?
16. In the 18th century, how did spirits help Britain have a more superior navy than France?
17. How did spirits help build America? (from getting the colonies off the ground to establishing our independence to the consolidation of power by the Federal government)
18. What were the negative effects/uses of spirits? (use entire chapter to answer this)

**COFFEE:** “Europe’s coffeehouses functioned as information exchanges for scientists, businessmen, writers and politicians. Like modern web sites.” (pg. 152)

19. Who did the Europeans get coffee from and how did it spread to Europe?
20. Why was it so important to Europe’s development that many people’s beverage of choice switched from alcohol to coffee?
21. Describe coffee’s effect on the balance of power between various regions of the world. (in terms of commerce).
22. How did coffee play a pivotal role in the scientific revolution? (give lots of detail)
23. How did coffee play a pivotal role in the “financial revolution”?
24. How did coffee play a pivotal role in the French Revolution? (give lots of detail and go into the Enlightenment)

**TEA:** “The story of tea is the story of imperialism, industrialization and world domination one cup at a time.” (pg. 177)

25. What were the health benefits of tea? How would this beverage help human development?
26. Which conquering people established the largest connected land empire in history?
27. When Europeans first reached China, describe the relationship between the groups (balance of trade, how their civilizations compared, etc).
28. What rights/powers did the British East India Company acquire (thanks in part to its gifts of tea to the king) which made it the most powerful corporation EVER?
29. Describe tea’s impact on industry/commerce inside Britain.
30. Describe the Opium wars, its impact, and tea’s role in it. How did the relationship between the government of Britain and the British East India Company change over time?
31. Describe how tea changed history in America, China, and India.

**COCA-COLA:** “To my mind, I am in this damn mess as much to help keep the custom of drinking Cokes as I am to help preserve the million other benefits our country blesses its citizens with. . .” (pg.253)

32. How did coca-cola become the world’s most recognized product?
33. How does coca-cola affect, and how is it affected by, people’s views of the United States?
34. What was America’s unique contribution to manufacturing?
35. Why is the 20th century referred to as “the American century”? By 1900 what global economic shift occurred?
36. Is Coca Cola an appropriate symbol of globalization? Why or why not?

**WATER:** “Six beverages have defined humankind’s past, but which will embody its future? One drink has already emerged as the most likely candidate. Like many of the defining drinks of history, it is highly fashionable, is the subject of conflicting medical claims, and has unseen but far-reaching geopolitical significance.” (pg. 266)

37. What evidence does Standage use to support his thesis that water has emerged as the beverage of the future? Do you agree with his thesis? Explain and provide rationale.