

[Global Commodities](#)
[Trade, Exploration and Cultural Exchange](#)



'Fifteen significant commodities that have transformed the world documented through a range of manuscript materials, maps, posters, paintings, rare books, and more'

One of the most popular ways of teaching World History is through the story of Global Commodities and the way in which these transformed the world. This project focuses on fifteen significant commodities whose stories are often intertwined. They are:

- **Chocolate**
- **Coffee**
- **Cotton**
- **Fur**
- **Oil**
- **Opium**
- **Porcelain**
- **Silver & Gold**
- **Spices**
- **Sugar**
- **Tea**
- **Timber**
- **Tobacco**
- **Wheat**
- **Wine & Spirits**

Each commodity is documented through a wide range of manuscript materials, maps, posters, paintings, photographs, ephemera, objects and rare books so that the student can explore the origins of the commodity, their first uses, the trade that developed and the ways in which these items were marketed and consumed.

The unique primary source content was sourced from libraries around the world, and guided by an editorial board of leading international scholars.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Global Commodities covers a truly vast range in both geography and chronology. Depending on the commodity in question, the reader can access rare and unique primary source content from the sixteenth century through to the present day, with material on Asia, Africa, Australasia, the Americas, Europe and Africa.

The archival material in *Global Commodities* has been indexed by 11 major themes, which tie in with important academic strengths at the university:

- Advertising and Consumption
- Art and Literature
- Cultivation
- Ecology and Environment
- Exploration and Discovery
- Health and Welfare
- Politics and Empire
- Production
- Social Practice
- Trade and Commerce
- Transportation

Advertising, business, and economics cover an interesting additional focus for the historical data contained here. Business accounts, mercantile papers and correspondences provide a great insight to this area, as well as the Robert Opie collection of brands, packaging and advertising.

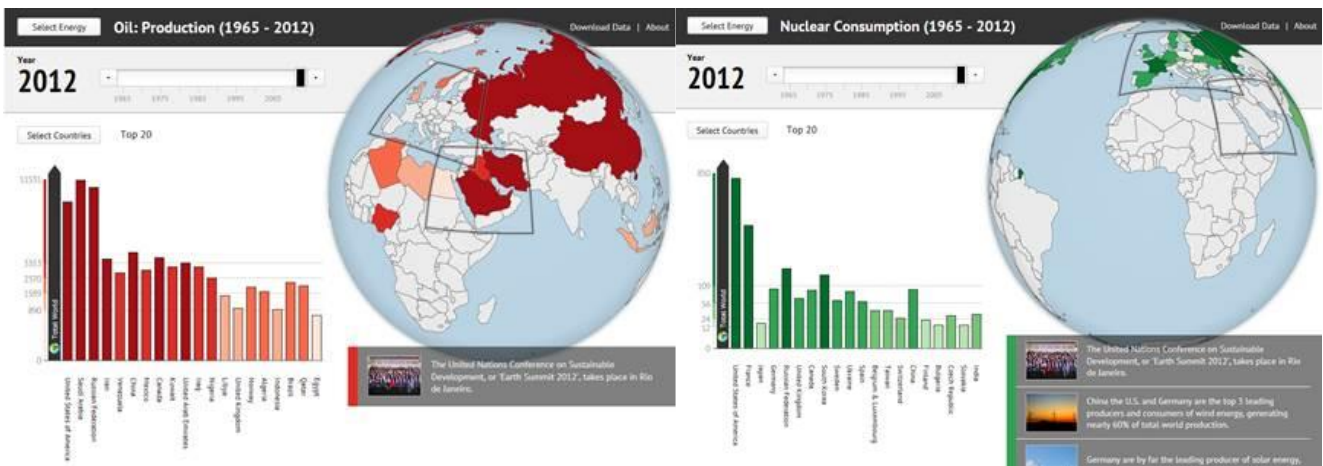


The collection contains a great deal of **visual sources**, including a collection of **artworks** connected in some way to global trade and global commodities. These paintings provide artists' views of the everyday use, availability or transportation of key commodities.

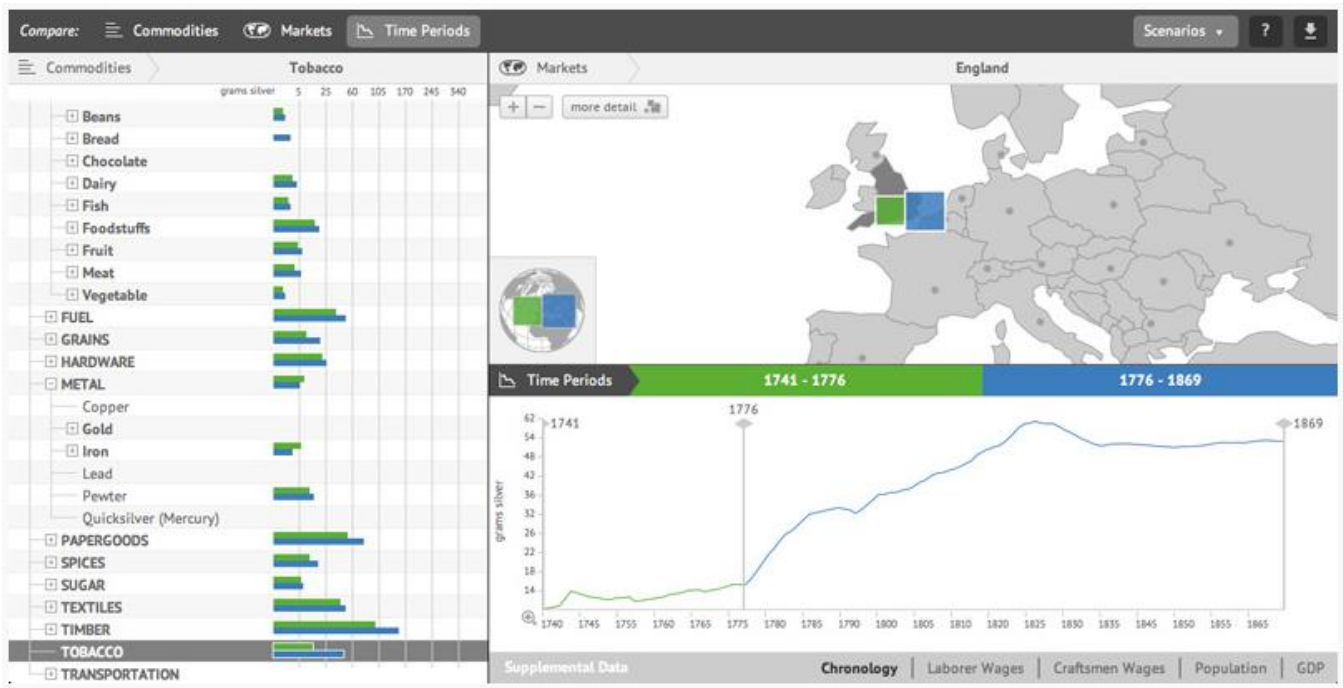
Themes of **religion** and **social/cultural history** can be thoroughly explored through the study of trade and changing use of commodities. There is much on prohibition, alcohol & opium, personal accounts of global cultural practices.

Ecology and the environment is one of eleven major themes in this resource, which ties in with some important areas of teaching and research. An exploration of **cultivation** and **agriculture** expands this field further.

One particularly interesting feature is the data visualization of the historic **BP energy dataset**, which is of huge academic interest in the study of global energy supply and consumption. One can trace energy production, consumption, CO2 emissions and all sorts of other datasets through an interactive globe and bar chart, providing statistics from 1965 to the present day. We update this annually as BP release new data, so students and scholars always have the most up to date information available. The resource is huge, and the potential for teaching and learning across a range of disciplines is vast.



We also have another powerful **Commodities Data Visualisation tool**, which allows the user to explore historic prices data across space, time and commodity.



- Use the maps to explore geographic differences across the global market.
- Use the line graph to see how price fluctuated over time.
- Use the bar chart to identify price differences between commodities.
- Select the supplemental data options to compare the prices data against the changing global economy and significant world events.
- Click the download button to download the data in a .csv file.

The visualisation contains prices for hundreds of commodities across hundreds of markets for almost a thousand years, from 965-1920. Currency has been standardised into grams of silver and units of measure have been standardised to allow for comparison across the globe. Data was collected at a highly-detailed level, even down to the variety of German beer. Therefore, you can view prices data for these individual commodity variants or, to facilitate more meaningful comparisons, we have aggregated commodities into major groupings and markets into countries/continents.