

Columbian Exchange Listening Questions

1. Where did the exchange mentioned at the beginning of this article happen?
2. What were the main products traded?
3. Who brought them?
4. Where did they come from?
5. The article mentions four foods that are now common in certain states or countries but were not there before Columbus. Can you and your friends remember three of these foods and the places famous for them now, that didn't have them before 1492?

Part 2

6. What New World food helped feed much of Europe, end frequent famines (times when many people could not get enough to eat and died of hunger), and let Europe become powerful?
7. What happened when Chinese farmers planted sweet potatoes on hills before they had much experience with ways to prevent erosion?

Reading Questions

1. What Old World animal made a great difference in the lives of native Americans on the Great Plains in North America?
2. Name a drink that comes from the Old World but is an important product in Latin America.
3. True or false: Bananas have always been an important food in the tropical parts of the Americas.
4. True or false: The Old World had many more domesticated animals than the New.
5. What came from the Old World and made it possible for a few Spaniards to conquer the Incas?
6. True or false: The Pilgrims and early colonists in New England found large areas of land with few native Americans because the native peoples had mostly moved to warmer climates.

Past & Present Perfect Tense Practice: Potatoes

Fill in the blanks using the past participles above each set of paragraphs to complete the present and past perfect tense uses in them.

become, been, been eating, called, disappeared, seen, spread, traced

People in the Andes region of South America **have** _____ potatoes for thousands of years. People in Ireland and other parts of Europe **had** never even _____ a potato until the late 16th or early 17th centuries, years after the Spanish conquest of Peru. So why **have** English-speaking people so often _____ white (as compared to sweet) potatoes “Irish” potatoes? It’s an interesting story, with a lot of drama.

Historians **have** _____ the route the “Irish” potato took to reach Ireland. From the Spanish colony of Peru in South America, potatoes were taken to Spain as food for sailors. Beginning around the middle of the 16th century (1500s), potatoes **had** _____ slowly through Europe, so that, by the late 1700s, they **had** _____ adopted by many Europeans as a useful crop.

Initial distrust and fear **had** slowly _____ as people realized the advantages of potatoes. They found that potatoes added nutrients to soups and stew. Potatoes prevented famine when grain crops failed or soldiers stole all they could carry off. (Europe had very frequent wars from the late 16th century through the early 19th century. Potatoes can be stored in the ground, since they are a root crop, so they are not so easy to steal.) By the early 19th century, potatoes **had** _____ a “safety net.”

**become, been, been (2x), been surviving, been working,
caused, come, had, preserved returned, used**

Potatoes **have** _____ some other major advantages over grain crops. They are easier to grow and prepare, and they provide more food value-- a higher percentage of calories-- from a small amount of land than any other major food crop. By the mid 1800s, historians believe potatoes **had** _____ or contributed to a large increase in European population, as they prevented famine and allowed more people to survive on less land. They **had** _____ a staple of the diet for Irish and eastern European peasants. In fact, due to changes in land policy, by the 1840s many Irish peasants **had** _____ on just potatoes and milk.

Then tragedy struck. Starting in 1845, potato blight (a kind of fungus) destroyed a large percentage of the potato crop in Ireland and elsewhere. The socio-political situation was worse in Ireland, though, and many people had no access to other foods or resources. Thousands died, and many more had to leave Ireland with nothing. Although there **had** _____ Irish in the U.S. since the colonial period, most Irish-Americans today can trace their families’ roots back to that mass immigration caused by the potato famine.

Over the years since the mid-19th century, scientists have _____ to the Andes to find and develop more blight-resistant varieties of potatoes. The native Andean populations **have** always _____ many varieties of potato, each with different characteristics, climate tolerances, and disease resistances. The potato disaster in Ireland and Europe was far worse because the whole potato crop **had** _____ from those few potatoes brought to Europe so long ago. The Irish and European peasants had no access to the resistant varieties growing in South America.

Many more varieties are available now, and potatoes are a major crop in much of the world. In fact, a survey of current use shows that the greatest potato production is now in China, followed by India. Potatoes are mostly grown in the countries where they are used, rather than for export, because they are difficult to store and spoil easily if they **have** _____ kept in less than ideal conditions. Researchers **have** _____ with the farmers of the Andes to ensure biodiversity. They **have** _____, and continue to grow, a great number of varieties, so there will always be some kinds to survive if a major disease destroys others. We don't want to take the potato for granted again!

* Information sources: [Cambridge.org "Potatoes,"](https://www.cambridge.org/core) History-magazine.com "potato," & Wikipedia "Potato."

Answers to the Listening Questions:

1. In Manila (the Philippine Islands)
2. silver and silk (and porcelain)
3. The Spaniards brought silver and the Chinese brought silk (and porcelain).
4. silver—mines in the Americas; silk (and porcelain)—China
5. oranges- Florida, tomatoes- Italy, chocolate- Switzerland, chili peppers- Thailand
6. potatoes
7. flooding (that led to political instability. Bring that out in the discussion afterwards if none of the groups followed the connection.)

Answers to Reading Questions:

1. horses/ the horse
2. coffee
3. F
4. T
5. smallpox
6. F (actual reason: native American populations there had been greatly reduced by epidemics of smallpox, measles, and other Old World diseases.)

Answers to the Past & Present Perfect Tense Practice

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Historians **have traced** the route the “Irish” potato took to reach Ireland. From the Spanish colony of Peru in South America, potatoes were taken to Spain as food for sailors. Beginning around the middle of the 16th century (1500s), potatoes **had spread** slowly through Europe, so that, by the late 1700s, they **had been** adopted by many Europeans as a useful crop.

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