

Key Concepts:

This minilesson lends itself to learning three foundational social studies concepts:

- the economic concept of **scarcity**;
- the historical concept of **turning point**;
- and the concept of **migration**.

1. Key Concept: Scarcity

According to economic theory, scarcity is a basic human problem. People will always want more of something than they can have. Scarcity can result from a resource being very rare—like gold, for example—so that it limits the amount people can acquire.

Scarcity can also result when potential consumers don't have enough money to get what they want. Say you want a new smart phone. While there are plenty of smart phones to be bought, you might not have enough money to buy a particular one. In this case, scarcity refers to the resources (money) you have available to exchange for the object you desire.

Scarcity is related to how things are valued. Something that is scarce—hard to get, like gold—will be valued more highly than something that's abundant—like paper. That can explain why gold is so expensive and paper is relatively inexpensive.

Apply the concept of scarcity to the history of cinnamon. Use your reading from "[Spice Migrations: Cinnamon](#)" to answer these questions to guide you.

- Why did cinnamon merchants keep its original location secret?¹
- How did the secrecy create a sense of scarcity?²
- What resulted from the spice's original location being secret?³

2. Key Concept: Turning Point

Historians study continuity and change over time. Many things remain constant, and sometimes, things change. Sometimes there's a big event that leads to the change. That kind of big event is called a turning point.

Apply the concept of turning point to the history of cinnamon. Use your reading from "[Spice Migrations: Cinnamon](#)" to answer these questions to guide you.

- In the history of cinnamon, there was a moment when the spice stopped being scarce. When was that moment?
- What trend did article identify a trend between 1000 CE and 1500 CE?⁴
- What happened after that trend that changed the availability of cinnamon? What was it?⁵

3. Key Concept: Migration

Migration refers to movement, of people, of animals or of things. The six articles in this series, Spice Migrations, explore how spices moved, over time, from their places of origin to other parts of the world.

Apply the concept of migration to the history of cinnamon. Use your reading from "[Spice Migrations: Cinnamon](#)" to answer these questions to guide you.

- What different groups of people moved cinnamon?⁶
- What was the power struggle among those groups?⁷
- Who "won" the power struggle and when?⁸

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1. If buyers didn't know where cinnamon came from, they could only get it from the merchants. The merchants could charge more money because buyers had nowhere else to get the spice.
 2. Cinnamon was only available through certain merchants. It was not abundantly available, as it is today.
 3. Higher value placed on cinnamon, and higher prices.
 4. Different people recognizing that cinnamon originated in Sri Lanka.
 - ⁵ According to the story, a Portuguese fleet landed in Sri Lanka and began the very lucrative trade of cinnamon.
 6. Arab and other merchants from the Middle East, followed by Portuguese, Dutch and British merchants.
 7. Each group controlled the cinnamon trade for a time before the next group was able to assert its dominance and control the trade.
 8. The British gained control of the cinnamon trade in the 18th century; however, by 1800, cinnamon was growing in more places and became more widely available.