

Cod The Fish That Changed History: How Cod Stimulated the
Exploration of Oceans, the Encounter of New Lands, and the
Exchange of Culture

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Group Website

Senior Division

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What originally drew us to our topic was a suggestion by one of our parents to look into a fish, specifically cod. Immediately after getting the idea, we saw that cod was a much more extensive and interesting idea than we had originally thought. We were especially drawn in by the far impacting historical significance of cod. From Vikings to Europeans, from economics to sea travel, we saw that it influenced many things throughout history, including our own state of Maine and the New England Region. One of the most interesting things we saw, was that wars have been fought over cod, and not just a long time ago, but recently. All of this, unattainable without the use of cod.

Our research started with one book, *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed The World*, by Mark Kurlansky. From this book, we began to further research the different aspects presented in the book. We found these sources in the pages of other books by the same author as well as a wide variety of websites. Upon suggestion by our teacher, the wonderful Mrs Hunter, we expanded our research and began to reach out to historians and experts on the topic in our area, including attending a panel discussion and a documentary premiere. Although we could not secure a meeting with Mr. Kurlansky, we were able to get in touch with our local historians and were flooded with support, suggestions, and information including sources and maps. We also found two books at our school that helped with research and information.

The choice of a website for our project was mainly due to the fact that we had chosen to do a website last year and we have the greatest experience with computers and creating presentable websites. Due to the addition of a new member to our group and the loss of the member we had worked with last National History Day, the choice of how we would present our topic was somewhat in flux, until the new member agreed that a website would be the best

choice under the circumstances. We also had a problem with our website last year at Nationals and we wanted to redeem ourselves.

The codfish connects to exploration, encounter and exchange in many different ways. Cod was traded and exchanged between many ancient civilisations, like the Vikings and the early Europeans, and also between more modern civilizations, like the Basque and Europeans of later years. It also influenced the exchange of cultures between groups of Vikings and Native Americans. The Basques encountered the new world due to their exploration of larger cod supplies to trade with others. The Viking's search for cod also caused them to encounter the new world and establish many colonies, though they eventually died out. Even today, the decline of cod fisheries is affecting the economy around the Gulf of Maine, and sparking international disputes. The cod is still affecting the world to this day.