

How Pizza Conquered America

Two articles explore how pizza and sushi made their way to the U.S.

About the Story

Lexile: 1000L (combined)

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective:

to synthesize information from two articles about how two international dishes became popular in America

Key Skills:

inference, key ideas and details, summarizing, cause and effect, text evidence, text features, synthesis

Essential Questions:

- What role does food play in our lives?
- How have immigrants shaped American culture?
- What makes certain foods popular?

Standards:

The articles and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards:

R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.9, W.2, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.5, L.6 For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.

How Pizza Conquered America
Frank Mastro helped turn an Italian dish into an American classic. So why have you never heard of him? by Anna Stachurski

Sushi Takes Over
How a Japanese businessman convinced Americans to eat raw fish by Kyrie Lewis

Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- The articles
- Vocabulary Slideshow

Literature Connections: ideas for connecting to curricular texts

Activities to print or project:

- Synthesis
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Core Skills Workout: Text Structure
- Quiz*
- Contest Entry Form

* Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1 Preparing to Read

Do-Now: Analyze a Quote

(5 minutes)

In a 2012 *New York Times* editorial, Rachel L. Swarns wrote “food is never just food.” Write this quote on the board and ask students to explain what they think it means. What can food do other than provide nourishment? *Students may say that food can reflect the person who made it; raise ethical or environmental issues; bring people together, such as at family get-togethers; provide income for farmers and restaurant owners; or celebrate someone, such as with a birthday meal.*

Preview vocabulary.

(5 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project our **Vocabulary Slideshow**. Review the words and activity as a class. Highlighted words: *flourishing, import, legacy, ritzy, scoffed, sentiment, skeptical*

2 Reading and Discussing

“How Pizza Conquered America”

(30 minutes, activity sheet online)

Read the article as a class. Briefly discuss anything students find interesting or surprising. Then discuss the following questions.

Close-Reading Questions

▶ According to the article, what was life like in America during the Great Depression?

(inference, key ideas and details) *According to the article, life in America during the Great Depression was hard. Author Anna Starecheski describes the time as one of the “darkest periods” in America’s history and explains that many people didn’t have enough money to buy food.*

▶ Why did Frank Mastro invent the gas pizza oven? (key ideas, summarizing) *At the time, pizza had to be baked in a large coal oven that was difficult to operate. Mastro believed a more convenient and affordable oven would allow more people to become part of the pizza industry, giving struggling families a way to generate income. And more pizza being made, Mastro believed, would give families an inexpensive option for dinner.*

▶ How did Mastro’s gas pizza oven affect the pizza industry in America? Use text evidence to support your answer. (cause and effect, text evidence)

Mastro’s gas oven contributed to the growth of the pizza industry in America. Starecheski writes on page 30 that after people began using gas pizza ovens, “the number of pizzerias in America soared from 500 to 20,000.”

▶ How does the information in the timeline contribute to the article? (text features) *The timeline provides additional details about the history of pizza, including when it was invented and how it became popular around the world.*

“Sushi Takes Over”

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Read the article as a class and respond to the following questions, some of which refer to both articles.

Close-Reading Questions

▶ What role did technology play in sushi’s growing popularity in America in the 1960s?

(key ideas and details) *In the 1960s, air travel became faster and cheaper, which enabled more Americans to travel outside the country and develop tastes for new cuisines. The development of refrigeration technology that allowed frozen food to be shipped great distances likely played a role in expanding Americans’ tastes as well.*

► On page 31, Kristin Lewis writes, “Kanai thought the time was right to put Japanese food on the American dinner plate.” What similar idea does Starecheski express about Frank Mastro in “How Pizza Conquered America”? (key ideas and details) In “How Pizza Conquered America,” Starecheski explains that Mastro believed that the 1930s was a good time to grow the pizza industry in America. Like Kanai, Mastro took into account the social and economic conditions in America as he contemplated introducing a new cuisine.

Critical-Thinking Questions

► On page 31, Lewis writes that sushi came to be seen as a “status symbol” after movie stars started eating it. Why would celebrities eating sushi lead to sushi becoming a status symbol? A status symbol is something a person buys to show wealth or social status. Because celebrities are wealthy and admired, the clothes they wear, the foods they eat, and the cars they drive often become status symbols.

► According to the timeline and “Sushi Takes Over,” different places have put their own spins on sushi and pizza. What are some possible drawbacks to altering a traditional food? What are some benefits? One drawback

could be that we lose the chance to eat a dish in its authentic, traditional form. One benefit could be that the food appeals to a greater number of people.

► What factors can help a dish become popular in a new place? For a dish to become popular in a new place, people must be open to new cuisines. For example, Lewis explains that sushi became popular in America in part because people at the time were traveling more and were interested in trying new and “exotic” foods. Technology can also play a role in a food becoming popular. People started traveling more because of advances in aviation, and, as Starecheski explains, the gas pizza oven helped pizza become popular. The association of a dish with a certain social group can also help make the dish more popular. Lewis explains that sushi became a status symbol after movie stars began eating it.

3 Skill Building

Featured Skill: Synthesis

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Have students work in groups to complete the **Synthesis** activity. This will prepare students to respond to the prompt on page 31. For alternate culminating tasks, see the box below.

Differentiate and Customize

For Struggling Readers

In a well-organized paragraph, explain two ways the rise of sushi in America is similar to the rise of pizza in America.

For Advanced Readers

Explain how immigrants have shaped American cuisine. Draw on information from both articles as well as at least two additional sources. Your response may be in the form of an essay, a slideshow, or a poem.

For Groups

Stage a live news segment in which a journalist interviews Kanai and Mastro about their contributions to American cuisine.

For Advertisers

Imagine that you work for Frank Mastro. Make an ad for his gas pizza oven. Your ad may be in the form of a billboard or a 30-second video commercial. Alternatively, create an ad for a sushi bar in 1960s Los Angeles.