

The script for the listening material- **English**

Video link <<https://youtu.be/xROmDsULcLE>>

00:06

Baked or fried,

00:08

boiled or roasted,

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as chips or fries.

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At some point in your life, you've probably eaten a potato.

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Delicious, for sure,

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but the fact is potatoes have played a much more significant role in our history

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than just that of the dietary staple we have come to know and love today.

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Without the potato,

00:27

our modern civilisation might not exist at all.

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8,000 years ago in South America, high atop the Andes,

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ancient Peruvians were the first to cultivate the potato. - Number 1 answer

00:38

Containing high levels of proteins and carbohydrates- Number 2 answer

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as well as essential fats, vitamins and minerals- Number 2 answer

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potatoes were the perfect food source to fuel a large Incan working class

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as they built and farmed their terraced fields,

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mined the Rocky Mountains,

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and created the sophisticated civilisation of the great Incan Empire.

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But considering how vital they were to the Incan people,

01:01

when Spanish sailors returning from the Andes

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first brought potatoes to Europe,

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the spuds were duds.

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Europeans simply didn't want to eat

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what they considered dull and tasteless oddities from a strange new land- Number 3 answer

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too closely related to the deadly nightshade plant belladonna for comfort.

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So instead of consuming them,

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they used potatoes as decorative garden plants- Number 4 answer

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More than 200 years would pass before the potato caught on

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as a major food source throughout Europe,

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though even then,

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it was predominantly eaten by the lower classes.

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However, beginning around 1750,

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and thanks at least in part

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to the wide availability of inexpensive and nutritious potatoes,

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European peasants with greater food security

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no longer found themselves

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at the mercy of the regularly occurring grain famines of the time,

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and so their populations steadily grew.

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As a result, the British, Dutch and German Empires

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rose on the backs of the growing groups of farmers, labourers, and soldiers,

02:02

thus lifting the West to its place of world dominion.

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However, not all European countries sprouted empires.

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After the Irish adopted the potato,

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their population dramatically increased- Number 5 answer

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as did their dependence on the tuber as a major food staple.

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But then disaster struck.

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From 1845 to 1852,

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potato blight disease ravaged the majority of Ireland's potato crop,

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leading to the Irish Potato Famine- Number 6 answer

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one of the deadliest famines in world history.

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Over a million Irish citizens starved to death,

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and 2 million more left their homes behind.

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But of course, this wasn't the end for the potato.

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The crop eventually recovered,

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and Europe's population, especially the working classes,

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continued to increase.

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Aided by the influx of Irish migrants,

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Europe now had a large, sustainable, and well-fed population

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who were capable of manning the emerging factories

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that would bring about our modern world via the Industrial Revolution.

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So it's almost impossible to imagine a world without the potato.

03:09

Would the Industrial Revolution ever have happened?

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Would World War II have been lost by the Allies

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without this easy-to-grow crop that fed the Allied troops?

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Would it even have started?

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When you think about it like this,

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many major milestones in world history can all be at least partially attributed

03:27

to the simple spud from the Peruvian hilltops.