Sydney W. Mintz’s aim in writing this article was to bring certain questions to light regarding the relationship between the manufacture and consumption of sugar throughout the past few centuries. His goal was to examine what this piece of food meant to those who used it. Throughout the article he emphasized that while examining the usage of sugar throughout history, it is important to think about what is was used for as well as the time period in which it was being used.

Mintz outlined the usage of sugar cane starting in the seventeenth century. This was a time when sugar cane was a significant crop in the New World and was used to create several things Europeans consumed, namely sugar, molasses, and rum. The extraction of sugar to create these products was more technical and complex than what Europeans were used to, ultimately resulting in sugar becoming a food of the rich. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, sugar consumption in England rose rapidly. By 1800 sugar had become a common food item for the English upper classes. However, by 1900, the popularity of sugar had become so widespread that it was seen as a necessity by all people, despite economic status. This was also a time when factories emerged, which came hand in hand with mass production of new foods for Europeans. Ultimately, Throughout the article—Mintz emphasized how the spread of sugar throughout the world was important in both an economic and cultural sense. Additionally, Mintz examined how the function of sugar transformed and developed over time. It started off as a medicine, then a sweetener, then a preservative, and then food itself in the form of molasses.

In addition to an anthropological perspective, Mintz looked at the meaning of the history of sugar consumption from a historical perspective. He structured most of his article in a chronological order, examining the use of sugar throughout each time period. He used data that revealed how much sugar was being used and what it was used for. Initially Mintz pointed out that he would examine the use of sugar cane, but he believed that it would be impossible to write about sugar cane alone because it is so often used with other foods. The way he discussed the foods in his article revealed this perspective because he constantly pointed out how sugar cane was intertwined with other foods which were developed during different times, which also revealed a transformation in the world.

An issue I had with this article was that at times Mintz went too far in making connections between his data and his main point. For example, he took a general statement that someone made about Europe’s focus on the New World and said that it was as if the author had been thinking about sugar at the time he wrote it. I think his opinion was a huge stretch, especially since the author had said nothing about sugar, and he should not have presented it in the article as if it was a fact.

Mintz also took the time to discuss the laziness of people when it came to eating in the early twentieth century. He explained that since there were more prepared foods available, the numbers of people always preparing food at home declined which was unhealthy. I thought this was extremely relevant to the present day.

Very good choice and a good critical review. You write well.