

When Cultures Travel

Overview

As people move, cultures travel. This is the history of the world, the United States, and probably many of your students. Why do people move? What aspects of their culture do they take with them? This activity directs students to think about the exchange of cultures that inevitably takes place when people move. It encourages them to think about cultures as never staying the same, nor staying in the same place.

Concepts

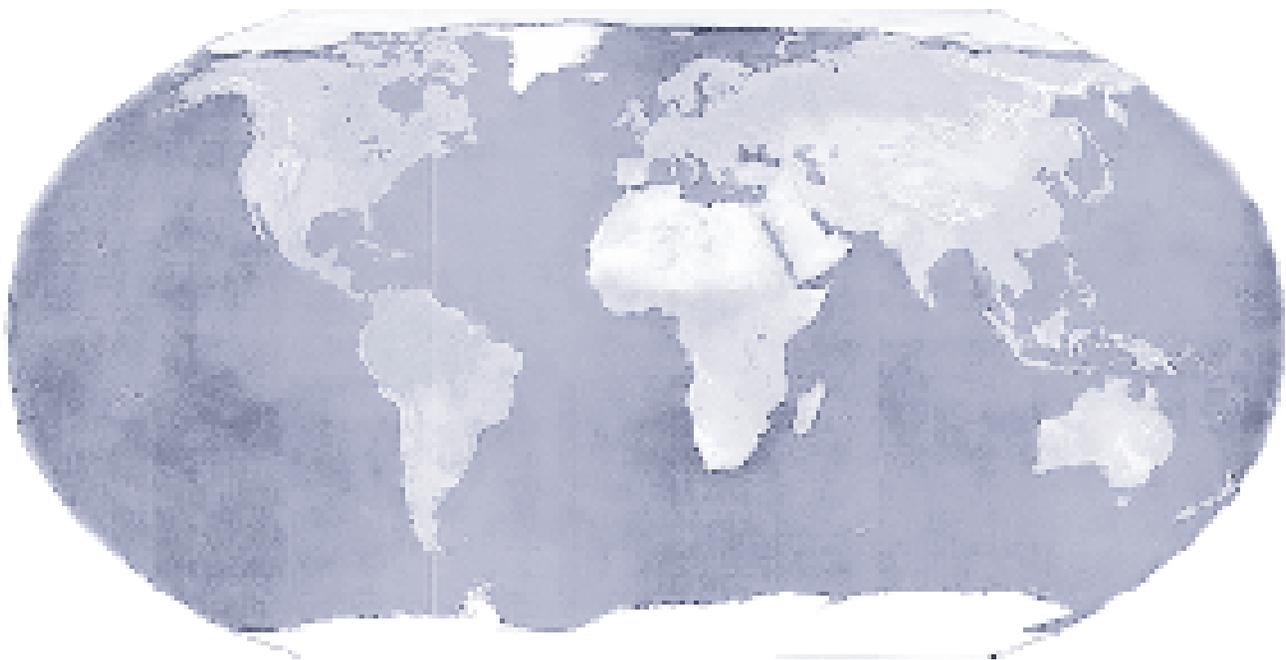
How communities change over time, cultural changes, exchange of cultural ideas over time and space, pace of change, posing questions and conducting research.

Objectives

- ▶ Plot the movement within and between countries to determine their origins and patterns of movement.
- ▶ Use these maps to determine the extent and nature of cultural changes within the communities they inhabit.
- ▶ Examine cultural artifacts and institutions that may reflect changing patterns of cultural movement. Determine which culture's values and ideas have grown and which may have diminished.
- ▶ Conduct individual or group research in a local community, posing questions and researching answers to determine how the community may have changed over time.
- ▶ Draw reasonable conclusions about the change and development of cultures over time.

Contents at a Glance

| | |
|---|---|
| Standards and Assessment | 3 |
| National Science Education Standards | 4 |
| Standards for the English Language Arts | 4 |
| Curriculum Standards for Social Studies | 5 |
| Teacher Strategies | 7 |



Standards and Assessment

Standards

The materials in this unit are closely correlated to the National Science Education Standards, Standards for the English Language Arts, and Curriculum Standards for Social Studies. A listing of the standards follows. A check mark indicates the standards that are addressed.

Assessment

This unit provides tasks that can be used to assess students' understanding of the information presented. Use the following questions to assess each student's reasoning, responses, understanding, and interaction.

- How well did the student use his or her observation skills?
- How well did the student demonstrate an understanding of the information provided?
- How well did the student communicate the observations he or she made?
- How well did the student explain concepts and ideas to other students?
- Was the student able to use evidence to support his or her conclusions?
- How well did the student complete the tasks outlined?
- How well did the student participate in all aspects of cooperative work?

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| <h1>National Science Education Standards</h1> <p>GRADES 5–8</p> <p>National Committee on Science Education Standards and Assessment, National Research Council</p> | |
| Science as Inquiry | |
| Abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry | ✓ |
| Understanding about scientific inquiry | ✓ |
| Science in Personal and Social Perspectives | |
| Populations, resources, and environments | |
| Science and technology in society | |
| History and Nature of Science | |
| Science as a human endeavor | |
| Nature of science | |
| <h1>Standards for the English Language Arts</h1> <p>GRADES 5–8</p> <p>National Council of Teachers of English</p> | |
| Students read to build an understanding of texts, themselves, and the cultures of the United States and the world. | ✓ |
| Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions of human experience. | |
| Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes. | |
| Students employ a wide range of writing strategies to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes. | |
| Students apply knowledge of language structure, conventions, and figurative language to create, critique, and discuss texts. | |
| Students conduct research; generate ideas and questions and pose problems; gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources; communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience. | ✓ |
| Students use a variety of technological and information resources to gather and synthesize information. | |
| Students develop a respect for diversity in language use. | |

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

GRADES 5–8

continued

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| Culture and Cultural Diversity | |
| Compare similarities and differences in the ways cultures meet human needs and concerns. | ✓ |
| Explain how information and experiences may be interpreted by people of diverse cultural perspectives. | |
| Explain and give examples of how language, literature, the arts, architecture, other artifacts, traditions, beliefs, values and behaviors contribute to the development and transmission of culture. | |
| Explain why individuals and groups respond differently to their physical and social environments and or changes to them on the basis of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs. | |
| Time, Continuity, and Change | |
| Demonstrate an understanding that different scholars may describe the same event or situation in different ways but must provide reasons or evidence for their views. | |
| Identify and use key concepts such as chronology, causality, change, conflict, and complexity to explain, analyze, and show connections among patterns of historical change and continuity. | ✓ |
| People, Places, and Environments | |
| Elaborate mental maps of locales, regions, and the world that demonstrate understanding of relative location, direction, size and shape. | ✓ |
| Create, interpret, use, and distinguish various representations of the Earth, such as maps, globes, and photographs. | |
| Use appropriate resources, data sources, and geographic tools such as aerial photographs, satellite images, geographic information systems (GIS), map projects, and cartography to generate, manipulate, and interpret information such as atlases, data bases, grid systems, charts, graphs, and more. | |
| Locate and describe varying landforms and geographic features, such as mountains, plateaus, islands, rain forests, deserts, and oceans, and explain their relationship within the ecosystem. | |
| Describe physical system changes such as seasons, climate and weather, and the water cycle and identify geographic patterns associated with them. | |
| Describe how people create places that reflect cultural values and ideals as they build neighborhoods, parks, shopping centers, and the like. | ✓ |
| Examine, interpret, and analyze physical and cultural patterns and their interactions, such as land use, settlement patterns, cultural transmission of customs and ideas, and ecosystem changes. | ✓ |

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

GRADES 5–8

continued

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| Describe ways that historical events have been influenced by, and have influenced, physical and human geographic factors in local, regional, national, and global settings. | |
| Observe and speculate about social and economic effects of environmental changes and crises resulting from phenomena such as floods, storms, and drought. | |
| Individual Development and Identity | |
| Describe personal connections to place – as associated with community, nation, and the world | ✓ |
| Describe the ways family, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and institutional affiliations contribute to personal identity. | ✓ |
| Identify and describe ways regional, ethnic, and national cultures influence individuals' daily lives. | |
| Individuals, Groups, and Institutions | |
| Demonstrate an understanding of concepts such as role, status, and social class in describing the interactions of individuals and social groups. | |
| Analyze group and institutional influences on people, events, and elements of culture. | |
| Production, Distribution, and Consumption | |
| Give and explain examples of ways that economic systems structure choices about how goods and services are to be produced and distributed. | |
| Describe the role of specialization and exchange in the economic process. | |
| Explain and illustrate how values and beliefs influence different economic decisions. | |
| Science, Technology, and Society | |
| Examine and describe the influence of culture on scientific and technological choices and advancement, such as in transportation, medicine, and warfare. | |
| Show through specific examples how science and technology have changed people's perceptions of the social and natural world, such as in their relationship to the land, animal life, family life, and economic needs, wants, and security. | |
| Seek reasonable and ethical solutions to problems that arise when scientific advancements and social norms or values come into conflict. | |
| Global Connections | |
| Describe instances in which language, art, music, belief systems, and other cultural elements can facilitate global understanding or cause misunderstanding. | |
| Explore causes, consequences, and possible solutions to persistent, contemporary, and emerging global issues, such as health, security, resource allocation, economic development, and environmental quality. | |

Teacher Strategies

MATERIALS

Post a map of the world in your classroom, and provide students with push pins and string.

PROCEDURE

1. First, have students map the movements of their families, going back two generations if possible. Ask them to mark their families' original locations, and each place they moved, with push pins on the world map. Have them include their current location, and connect the push pins with string, so they can see the "routes" their families have traveled. Review the results as a class and ask students for their observations. Where did we all come from? What countries, states, or nearby towns? Why did your family move to this area? When?
2. Next, students will begin to consider how their families' movements are reflected in the culture of their neighborhoods. Ask students to think about their neighborhoods, explaining that neighborhoods are like people—they grow, they change, they take on various personalities. Explain that as people move, the look and feel of a community may change. Shops, restaurants, and religious centers, for example, open and close.
3. Have students work independently or in groups to write a description of their neighborhood. What kinds of places have opened or closed recently? What is happening in the neighborhood that brings people in or causes them to leave? In some places change happens quickly, while in others it happens slowly. Why might this be?
4. Students should include evidence or clues that tell them something about the people living in this place. Are there signs in other languages or buildings that reflect cultural styles? Community centers that target certain groups? Flyers announcing certain events? Movie theaters that show certain films? Shops that sell certain foods? Restaurants that serve special cuisine?
5. Finally, students should reflect on how the "things" in their neighborhood affect their lives. Is there a diversity of food products? How does this affect what they eat? Are they exposed to different religions? Do they wear different kinds of clothing? Listen to different kinds of music? As a class, discuss how the culture of the neighborhood relates to the map created at the beginning of class. Is everyone's culture reflected in the community? Why or why not?

NEXT STEPS

Note: In preparation for this extension, educate yourself about various approaches to studying communities. See www.edheritage.org/, a community-centered curriculum developed in partnership with the American Folklife Center. In addition, think about the level to which you want to develop this project; this is more than a one-day exercise and works best when integrated into other curricular needs.

1. Extend the activity outside the classroom and ask students to conduct their own field-work. Explain to students that they will be assuming the role of anthropologists, and their place of study is a street in their neighborhood. They will set out to document and describe who lives and works there, along with changes they notice in the community. Each student needs a pen and paper, and could even take pictures or videotape if the equipment is available to them.
2. Students should write their observations, describing what they see and identifying the evidence that supports their findings. They might wish to “collect” an artifact like a menu, photograph, sign, etc. These objects could also become the beginnings of a class exhibition about the community. At each site, students should conduct an interview. If they visit a new store, for example, they should arrange time to meet with the owner or the people who work there. They could ask questions about when and how the store got started, and what the daily responsibilities are.
3. Finally, use this activity as a seed for an oral history project involving students’ families and their stories of movement, immigration, and migration. In class, create a list of questions. For example, what new things did students’ family members start doing in this neighborhood? What traditions did they bring with them? Which did they leave behind? How did they share their culture with others? How has the community changed over time?
4. Ask students to use this list to conduct interviews with family members—a grandparent, for example—or other people in their community. Students should gather stories of their families’ arrival to the neighborhood.