

Observing the Characteristics of Cultures

Author Gale Olp Ekiss
Grade Level 7- High School
Duration 2-3 class periods

National Standards

GEOGRAPHY Element 2: Places And Regions

4. The physical and human characteristics of places
6. How culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions

AZ Standards

Production and Distribution of Writing

7.W.6 Use technology, including the internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others.
8.W.6 Use technology, including the internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.
7.W.8 and 8.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
11-12.W.6 Use technology, including the internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.
11-12.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

Arizona Social Science Standards

Human-environment interactions are essential aspects of human life in all societies.

7.G2.2 Analyze cultural and environmental characteristics that make places both similar and different.
8G2.2 Evaluate how political, social, and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.
HS.G2.2 Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.
HS.G2.3 Evaluate the impact of human settlement on the environment and culture of specific places and regions.
Global interconnections and spatial patterns are a necessary part of geographic reasoning.
7.G4.1 Analyze cultural and environmental characteristics among various places and regions of the world.

Overview

Geographers use a set of skills that include: Observation, Speculation, Analysis and Evaluation (OSAE). The first step of OSAE comes from visual

observations.

Another aspect of geography is the study of world cultures. Culture is defined as a way of life of a group of people. Culture includes language, arts and

crafts, customs, dress, religion, forms of amusement, commonly found institutions, technology, and signs of wealth and beauty within a group of people.

Purpose

In this lesson, students learn characteristics of culture by viewing images. Students will then create a photo essay reflecting on what they have observed and researched about a culture.

Materials

- NGS Video Culture—(15 min)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0zc8DP1jGA>
- Mind Map and Key
- Elements of Culture—even more characteristics of culture
- Observing the Characteristics Worksheet
- Iceberg Model of Culture
- Observing Cultures through Images power point (**no slide titles**) for Session One
- Observing Cultures through Images power point (**with slide titles**) for Session Two
- Photo Essay Assignment
- 40 Portraits by Steve McCurry or 40 photos of people from various cultures—cut out and laminated
- List of countries represented by the people in the photos
- List of countries to research (eliminating the U.S.)

Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. identify common characteristics of culture.
2. analyze different ways to view places.
3. create a photo essay using technology.

Procedures

There are two ways to use this lesson based on if you can project the video produced by National Geographic and now on YouTube called Culture—Tapestry of Life. The video is really ideal for this lesson. However an option is to use the power point of images made for Session One.

SESSION ONE

1. Pass out the Mind Map.
2. Introduce the lesson with the definition of culture and have the students watch the video: (Culture-Tapestry of Life) or the power point. Use the photos as prompts for **What characteristic(s) of culture do these images portray?** Let the students raise hands and guess. As the students correctly identify the characteristics of culture (clothing, foods, language, etc.), record the characteristics on the board while the students record the elements on their mind map.
3. Now display the image at the end of the power point or use the image included in the student files called **Iceberg Model of Culture**. Have students look at the characteristics they have written and then decide if they are above or below the water level. Discuss how some elements are visible; others are not. The visible elements of culture can be easily observed; however, other elements may take learning about and observing a culture for a long period of time.
4. Pass out the laminated photos from the Steve McCurry book or photos of people from other sources
5. Have the students complete the Observing the Characteristics of Culture worksheet.
6. Closure: Select several students to share their observations with the class by having them hold up their photo and share 2-3 observations about their person and his/her culture.

SESSION TWO and THREE

1. Have students find a partner and then “draw out of the hat” a country to research.
2. Explain the writing assignment and the scoring guide.
3. Show the lesson power point with titles to the slides so they can see a model of what to create. Note: Most of these slides have 4 or more examples. To decrease the time the photo essay will take, cut down the number of images needed on a slide to 1 or 2 unless there is great variety within a country. For example: it would give people the wrong impression to only list 1 religion for the United States. But you could do favorite food or music if you have research to back this up.
4. Take students to the computer lab to create their photo essay. If time allows, have students share their slide shows with the class.
5. Closure: Have students reflect on the characteristics of culture that they portrayed in the slide show. Were they “above or below the water line?” Why?

Assessment

Students' Observing the Characteristics Worksheet and mind maps can be graded for completeness. Mastery is 90% or higher.

The Photo Essay Assignment can be graded using the scoring guide provided. Mastery will be considered 80% or higher.

Extensions

While this lesson deals with cultures outside the U.S., the same characteristics can be applied to historical times in American history. Have students identify colonial or pre-Civil war culture traits, etc.

Included with this lesson are several scavenger hunts.

- Using Your Geographic Lens to View the Landscape (Can be used at school.)

- Using Your Geographic Lens to View the Urban Landscape (Can be used in community.)
- Using Your Geographic Lens to Document Culture and Cultural Diffusion (Can be used at museums such as the Musical Instrument Museum.)

There is also a PowerPoint on Cultural Diffusion.

Sources

McCurry, Steve. *Portraits* (Phaidon Press, June 1999) ISBN 071483839X 512 pages (used on Amazon.com \$2.50)

NGS Video Culture—(15 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0zc8DPIjGA>

Virtue, David C. and Kenneth Vogler. "Pairing Folktales with Textbooks and Nonfiction in Teaching About Culture." *Social Studies and the Young Learner* 21 (3): 2009. p-21.