

Delaware Recommended Curriculum

This unit has been created as an exemplary model for teachers in (re)design of course curricula. An exemplary model unit has undergone a rigorous peer review and jurying process to ensure alignment to selected Delaware Content Standards.

Unit Title: Cultural Patterns and Diffusion

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Content Area: Social Studies

Grade Level: 6

Summary of Unit

Places are unique, and they change over time. In earlier grades, students have begun to explore the physical aspects and human aspects of the site¹ and the effects of links with other places, the geographic situation. In this unit, they will begin to explore the ways in which places are expressions of human cultures.

Cultures can be understood as a set of “ways of doing.” While all cultures prepare and eat food, they select different ingredients and combine them in different ways. While all cultures build shelter, the form of the homes people build is culturally distinctive.

In this unit, students will begin to develop basic recognition of cultural patterns that are associated with world regions. For example, students will associate writing with Chinese characters, rice as a food staple, eating with chopsticks, and the wisdom of Confucius with the place and culture of China.

When people move, they take their culture with them. The effects of trade, travel and immigration are often observed in a landscape. The movement of cultural traits across space is called cultural diffusion. Cultural hearths are places where a unique cultural cluster of language, customs and other traits developed. Diffusion from these hearths can be traced by noting evidence in the landscape. As people move away from the core, they may share their cultural ideas with people in the new areas. However, they often modify or adapt to the new culture in ways that can be spotted in the landscape. Understanding cultural diffusion enables students to better interpret the world around them.

¹ [Understanding the Geography Standards 6-8](#)

This unit is designed to model a regional study. While the resources and references provided are focused on Asia, teachers who wish to teach culture and cultural diffusion in another regional context will find it easy to adapt the unit by using comparable resources and making small adjustments to assessments. Students encounter ideas about trade and transport and drawing of borders in the 6th grade DRC unit, [Reasons for Regions](#). Information about mapping of data and mapping movement extend learning in [Building Global Mental Maps](#). Foundations from this unit will be further developed in [Green Cities](#).

Stage 1 – Desired Results

What students will know, do, and understand

Delaware Content Standards

Geography Standard Three 6-8a: Students will identify and explain the major cultural patterns of human activity in the world's sub-regions.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1](#)

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.3](#)

Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7](#)

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Big Ideas

- Places change over time
- Culture
- Cultural Diffusion

Unit Enduring Understandings

- Places are unique associations of natural environments and human cultural modifications.
- Concepts of site and situation can explain the uniqueness of places. As site or situation change, so also does the character of a place.

Unit Essential Questions

- What makes a place culturally unique?
 - What is culture?
 - How might site and situation affect the development of a culture?
 - How does culture affect the nature of a place?
- Under what conditions do cultures spread?
 - What happens to places when people trade and travel?
 - Why do people move? How does immigration change places?
 - What spatial patterns develop when cultures develop and diffuse?

Knowledge and Skills

Students will know...

Cultural attributes/ site

Cultural patterns of behavior and activity, land use, etc

Cultural hearths

Locations of cultural hearths

Trade, travel and immigration are agents of cultural diffusion

Students will be able to...

- Analyze the site and situation of a given place
- Identify cultural characteristics of a place
- Associate cultural patterns with their cultural hearth
- Predict the impact of cultural diffusion

Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence

Evidence that will be collected to determine whether or not Desired Results are achieved

Click [here](#) for the Transfer Task and Rubric.

Stage 3 – Learning Plan

Learning activities that align with Stage 1 and Stage 2 expectations

Lesson One: What is Culture?

Essential Question

- What makes a place culturally unique?

Background

Geographers are interested in culture because culture molds and shapes places into cultural landscapes. Culture is a learned way of doing things, and each group leaves its cultural mark on the landscape. Geographers become trained observers, noting evidence of cultural influences. Even young geographers can be asked to keep their eyes peeled for different types of dress, architecture, and ways of doing and speaking. They are asked to note how groups of people in the same physical region may build quite different settlements or neighborhoods because of their culture. These observable differences in the landscape can be mapped and then can become the basis for establishing regions or tracking cultural diffusion.

Instructional Strategies

Strategy One: Gathering Information

Think-Pair-Square²

Place students in groups of two. Ask each group to brainstorm a list of activities that people everywhere have in common. As groups share their lists, a common list of activities will emerge.

Have the students expand and refine this list using the Think-Pair-Square strategy until they have included activities like growing and preparing food, building shelter, providing clothing, making tools, communication and other such basic functions.

Explain to the students that while people do many of the same things in every place on earth, they do them in different ways.

Strategy Two: Extending and Refining

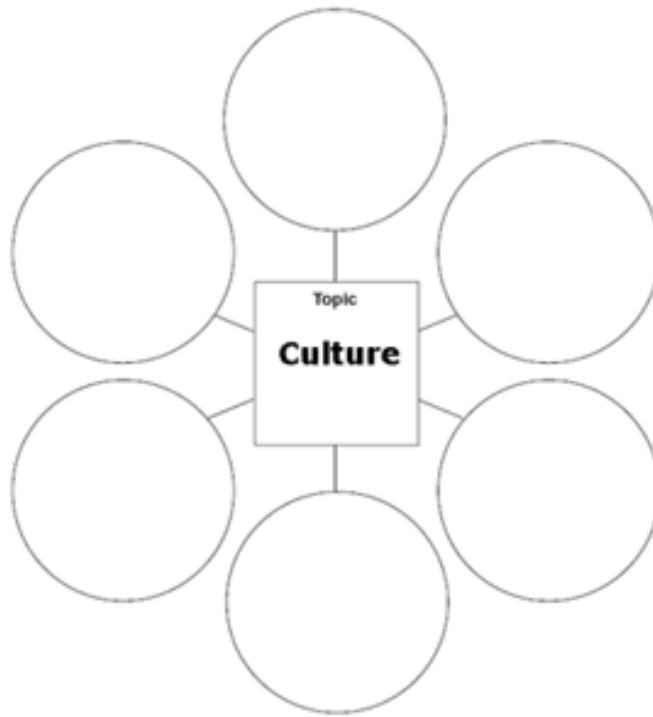
Think-Pair-Share and Graphic Organizers

Conversational descriptions, explanations, and examples are very useful to students when first learning a term. An effective approach to beginning instruction in academic terms is **for the teacher to start a conversation** about it, explain it, and give examples of it.

Culture is what you learn as you grow up. Culture includes what you know about how to speak and act toward others. Your culture celebrates certain holidays and not others, teaches you certain things and not others. For example, you might celebrate the 4th of July, but in other places it is just another day in the month. Parts of a culture include what you eat, wear, what kind of place you live — the houses and neighborhoods.

Have students think independently: *What comes to mind when you hear the word **culture**?* Have them make a simple web graphic organizer with culture in the center of the web.

² This [activity](#) is built on the foundation of Think-Pair-Share without the class reporting. After Think-Pair-Share takes place, partners team up with another set of partners, creating groups of four students. Each group compares the two sets of answers or solutions. From the two the group decides on a compromise. The whole class reports out on their decisions.



Students should complete the web organizer and then pair with another student to share responses. Have students add, modify, or delete from their graphic organizer after discussion with a partner. Then this pair should group with another pair to agree upon a generalization about culture, a common description for which the group can agree.

Give students this description of culture and have them compare it to the generalization from each group. Have students compile the similarities and differences in a T-chart.

Definition of Culture: *Culture is the learned behavior of people, which includes their belief systems, and languages, their social relationships, their institutions and organizations, and their material goods—food, clothing, buildings, tools, and machines.*

Similarities	Differences

Check for Understanding

- Did you add, delete, or modify from your own graphic organizer after hearing what others said? Explain why or why not.

Rubric

- 1 – This response gives a valid explanation.
- 0 – This response gives an invalid or no explanation.

- How would you describe *culture* now? Explain your answer.

Rubric

- 2 – This response gives a valid description with an accurate and relevant explanation.
- 1 – This response gives a valid description with an inaccurate, irrelevant, or no explanation.

Strategy Three: Extending and Refining Timed-Pair Paraphrase³

Keep students in the groups from Strategy One. Have students view the short film from National Geographic, [Cultures: The Tapestry of Life](#).⁴

The teacher should decide which partner will go first. Have one student “tell how this film, which uses no narration, explains culture. You have two minutes.”

Set a timer. After two minutes, have the partner student relate what the other just said. The paraphrase might start, “I heard you say...”

Ask students to share with the whole class what their partners said. Reverse the process.

Check for Understanding

- In the food court of the local shopping mall, a small restaurant space has become available for rent. You and your friend have decided to open an ethnic restaurant. A market survey shows that customers would welcome an Italian, Mexican, or Chinese restaurant.
- Select one of the cultural groups recommended by the survey (Italian, Mexican or Chinese). Use the [handout](#) provided to show how you would create the sense of place for your customers.

³ This strategy requires all students to participate in the discussion. Source: Betty Hollas. *Differentiated Instruction in a Whole-Group Setting*. c.2005. Crystal Springs Books, pg. 10.

⁴ Used with permission.

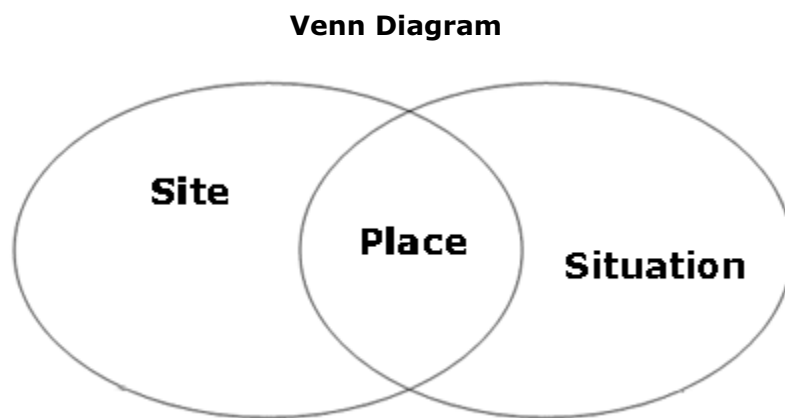
Note to Teachers: Students may feel unprepared for this formative assessment. However, it will give you an idea of student perceptions or misperceptions of culture.

Strategy Four: Application
Think-Pair-Share and Graphic Organizer

Ask students this question: What does the word **place** mean to a geographer?⁵

After individually thinking about place, have students next share their understanding with a partner and follow that by sharing with the class.

Have students create a Venn diagram to help organize the meaning of **place**. Model the following: write **Place** where the circles overlap, then write **Site** on one side and **Situation** on the other side.



Give a copy of the following maps to each pair of students:

- Site of New York City
- Situation of New York City

Have them use the Venn diagram to help differentiate between site and situation.

⁵ **For the teacher:**

Places may be defined as locations with character. A place occupies a given location on the earth's surface—what may be called its site. That site contains a unique combination of physical environmental conditions: climate, landforms, soils, and vegetation. It also contains people with distinct cultural attributes who modify that environment to create a distinctive place. Places, however, reflect one additional attribute, their location relative to all other places, or their situation. Places close together can expect to have more interaction—trade, information flow, human migration—than places farther apart and thus be more subject to change over time. Isolated places change little. Evaluating a location's site and situation allows identification of those distinctive characteristics that make it a unique place.

New York City, originally located on Manhattan Island, has a poor **site**, bounded by the Hudson and East Rivers. Many tunnels and bridges had to be built to connect it to the rest of the nation. But its **situation** is superior, located at the confluence of the Atlantic Ocean and the Hudson River. When the Erie Canal was built, New York City had the ability to reach growing 19th century western settlements. With a much better situation than other large cities of the 1800s (such as Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore), in the 1800s it became the country's largest city, a title it has never given up.

Check for Understanding

- What is the relationship between a place (New York City) and its site and situation? Diagram or draw the relationship.

Rubric

2 – This response gives a valid relationship with an accurate and relevant diagram or drawing.

1 – This response gives a valid relationship with an inaccurate, irrelevant, or no diagram or drawing.

- Given New York City's site and situation, why might a geographer expect its culture to be diverse? Explain your answer.

Rubric

2 – This response gives a valid reason with an accurate and relevant explanation.

1 – This response gives a valid reason with an inaccurate, irrelevant, or no explanation.

Lesson Two: Asian Connections

Essential Question

- What happens to places when people trade and travel?

Background

Individuals make the decision to move from one place to another for many reasons. Some are called “Push factors” (reasons why it seems better to move away from the place you are established). “Pull factors” are the reasons why it seems beneficial to settle in a specific location. For example, if a person decided to leave his home in Vietnam because he could not find work, that would be a push factor. If he decided to go to Singapore because he heard there were new factories opening there, the possibility of finding factory employment would be a pull factor. Click [here](#) for definitions of terms and simple explanations for why individuals and families move.

Instructional Strategies

Strategy One: Gathering Information Geographic Information Systems

Ask the students to check labels on clothing, shoes, and other items and list the countries where goods are manufactured. Compile a list of countries of origin.

In all probability, many of the everyday items students use and wear were made in Asia. Tell the students that trade with Asia is nothing new. Two thousand years ago, traders risked dangers and invested lots of money in equipment to trade for goods made in China. The name of the trade network that carried goods from China to the European countries on the Mediterranean Sea and beyond was called the Silk Road.

Introduce Asia, the region under study, with this [video from National Geographic, *A GIS Journey*](#), which combines a regional overview with a review of the value of GIS mapping. Geographic Information System (GIS) software uses the power of geography, spatial location to gather, analyze, and visualize vast amounts of information. Students will use this innovative technology to investigate the cultures of Asia.

Have students use [this graphic organizer](#) while viewing the video in order to focus on two questions related to the site:

- What is the land of Asia like? (very large, has extremely high mountains and deep depressions, lots of people, large cities, monsoon rains)

- What do the people of Asia do? (grow food, build dams, climb mountains, deal with natural disasters)
- How many of these activities are uniquely Asian?

Strategy Two: Extending and Refining Identifying Similarities and Differences

Provide each student one card from the [Say "Hello" to Asia! handout](#). Place students in groups of 3-4.

Strategy Three materials needed

- one Asian *Hello!* Language card for each student
- one sheet poster board and one Asia map for each group
- markers and/or colored pencils

Explain to the students that each card tells how to write and say hello in one of the languages of Asia. Each student in the group should complete the following activities:

- write "Hello" on the poster using the card as a guide;
- say "hello" using the pronunciation guide on the second line;
- locate and label the country where the language is spoken on the group world map.

Display the posters and ask the students to think about the written language on the posters.

- Which writing systems look similar?
- Which are most like English?

Check for Understanding

Recall the nine languages from the [Say "Hello" to Asia! handout](#).

- How are the languages of Asia different from one another? Explain your answer with an example.

Rubric

2 – This response gives a valid difference with an accurate and relevant example.

1 – This response gives a valid difference with an inaccurate, irrelevant, or no example.

Sample Responses

2 – The written languages look different. For example, Chinese words look like art and Russian letters seem like ours.

1 – The languages sound different.

Strategy Three: Extending and Refining

Ask the students if they have ever moved, and if so, why?

Most students have little experience with international movement, but they may have moved to a new town or a new school. Ask students what happened when they moved to the new setting? Did they try to “fit in” to the new setting by adopting the dress, speech patterns, or interests of the new school or neighborhood?

When individuals or families move to a new place, they must decide whether or not to adopt the ways of their new community. Each individual and each family must decide how much of the new culture they are willing to accept, and what things from their own culture they want to keep.

Have students consider the experience of an exchange student. He or she is learning new customs and taking in new ideas. He or she may decide to try some aspects of the new culture while they are visiting.

Have the students read [this letter](#) by an exchange student.⁶ Have the students note or list the American cultural characteristics that seem important to the exchange student.

- How has the student adapted or changed because of the exchange student experience? Find specific details from the text to explain your answer.
- Are these changes likely to be permanent?

Strategy Four: Application

Graphic Organizer

Have students use [this graphic organizer](#) to view [The Silk Roads PowerPoint](#)⁷ by Carol Gersmehl (NY Geographic Alliance) and Marty Mather (Michigan Geographic Alliance). Students learn about the Silk Roads, an important trade connection for Europe.

Students should notice that goods, people, animals, and cultural ideas moved along the Silk Road. When students have completed the graphic organizer, discuss the impacts of the Silk Roads on China, on Europe, and on the places along the route. [Use this answer sheet to guide student understanding.](#)

Check for Understanding

⁶ Document retrieved from <http://www.kitsapsun.com/ugc/north-kitsap-ugc/the-life-of-an-exchange-student-from-china-767>. Alternatively, invite an exchange student to visit with the class and discuss his or her experience. This letter has a [lexile](#) level of 870, below the Common Core State Standards text complexity expectations for the 6-8 grade band. However, its authenticity is important.

⁷ Created by Carol Gersmehl, carol.gersmehl@gmail.com, Co-coordinator, New York Geographic Alliance in cooperation with Marty Mather, Michigan Geographic Alliance. Adapted with permission by Maggie Legates, Delaware Geographic Alliance, 2012.

- How might life in Europe have been different if the Silk Road had not existed? Support your answer with evidence or examples.

Rubric

2 – This response gives a valid difference with an accurate and relevant example.

1 – This response gives a valid difference with an inaccurate, irrelevant, or no example.

Student responses might include examples related to specific products of Asia, inventions, or ideas that would not have been introduced to Europeans if the Silk Road connection had been cut off.

Lesson Three: Cultural Hearths and Cultural Diffusion

Essential Question

- What spatial patterns develop from the diffusion of cultures?

Background

A key idea for cultural diffusion is that cultural ideas move from one place to the other. Geographers use various methods to show movement on a static map. One important map technique is the use of arrows to show the *direction* and *volume* of a flow. The arrow might represent people, dollars, gallons of oil, numbers of phone calls, almost any observable indicator of interaction. However, unlike a conventional map, the arrows on these GIS maps usually do not show the transport routes.⁸

Two other ways cartographers show movement or diffusion are using colors or patterns for different time periods ([see map of expansion of Islam](#)) or by producing a series of maps showing change over time. Historical atlases often include these sets, and some “animated maps” showing diffusion or expansion are also available online.⁹

Instructional Strategies

Strategy One: Gathering Information

Interactive Maps

Distribute the student reading [Maps Can Show Movement](#). This includes an activating strategy in which students look at movement diagrams for sports and activities. Students then investigate the ways GIS maps show flows of trade or other movement. Have students complete the “Thinking like a Geographer” questions as a formative assessment.

Strategy Two: Gathering Information

Interactive Maps

The idea that maps can be used to organize data and look for patterns will be transferred to cultural diffusion in the student reading and exercise [Cultural Hearths and Cultural Diffusion](#).¹⁰

⁸ This section relates to and reinforces Geography Standard One (see pp. 2-4 in this linked document).

⁹ A good example is [Diffusion of Buddhism - India to China](#).

¹⁰ This reading has a [lexile](#) level of 1110, appropriate for grades 6-8.

Explain that the same principle of diffusion applies to inventions and innovations (use of gunpowder, porcelain dishes, paper money), products (tea, jade), languages and other cultural ideas.

Strategy Three: Extending and Refining Ethnic Communities

When whole groups of people or whole communities move, they often settle together and try to recreate the landscape they are used to. Of course, they must also adapt to some parts of the new environment. Show the following [clip of Chinatown](#) in Boston, Massachusetts, or select another slideshow to provide students with insight into an ethnic community.

Reflection: Ask the students to note what changes the Chinese immigrants have made in this neighborhood. Point out that this area of town has been home to other ethnic groups before the Chinese. How might it have looked different when the neighborhood was populated by Irish immigrants, Italians, Jews, or Syrians?

Check for Understanding

- Which person do you think would be more open to learning new ways of living or doing - an older member of the traditional community who lives near the core of the cultural hearth, or a younger member of a community who lives near the periphery? Why do you think this?

Strategy Three: Application China Trade

Poll the students, recording the number of people who agree or disagree with these statements:

1. The United States began trading with China when wages in the United States rose and it became cheaper for businesses to make things in China.
2. Chinese people do not like the Americans and American ways.
3. American people know a lot about China and Chinese customs.
4. Chinese people know a lot about the United States and American customs.
5. China is our largest trading partner. (More goods and services are traded between U.S. and China than other countries).

Leave the results of the opinion poll on display. Distribute the reading [China Trade](#).¹¹ Ask the students to read the article.

- Does it change any of their responses?

¹¹ This reading has a [lexile](#) level of 1000, appropriate for the Common Core State Standards expectations in grades 6-8.

Repeat the poll. Ask if there are additional resources that would be helpful in deciding if statements were correct or not.

Check for Understanding

- Somewhere in America his afternoon, a child is suiting up for his after-school Karate class. Somewhere in China, a teen girl is leaving for a concert dressed in American blue jeans and T-shirt.
- How might a geographer explain these choices?

Additional Resources

These lesson plans from the Asia Society offer additional insights into the value of trade and travel connections.

- [The cities of the Silk Road today - How they are involved in world trade](#)
- [Art Treasures Along the Silk Road](#)