

CULTURE EVERYWHERE

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| SUBJECTS: | Social studies, language arts |
| SKILLS: | Knowledge, comprehension, analysis, evaluation |
| STRATEGIES: | Brainstorming, categorizing, discussion |
| DURATION: | 30 to 45 minutes |
| CLASS SIZE: | Any |

Objectives:

In their study of culture students will use a chart to:

1. Show the different ways that cultures meet basic human needs.
2. Recognize that archaeologists study how past cultures met basic needs by analyzing and interpreting the artifacts and sites that those cultures left behind.

Materials:

"Comparing Cultures" activity sheet for each student.

Vocabulary:

anthropology: the comparative study of human behavior.

archaeology: a method for studying human cultures by analyzing material evidence (artifacts and sites).

cultural relativism: studying other cultures without making judgments about them.

culture: the set of learned beliefs, values and behaviors generally shared by members of a society. "The way the members of a group of people think and believe and live, the tools they make, and the way they do things" (Braidwood, 1967, p. 30).

ethnocentrism: the attitude that one's traditions, customs, language, and values are the only right and proper way and that other cultures are inadequate or wrong.

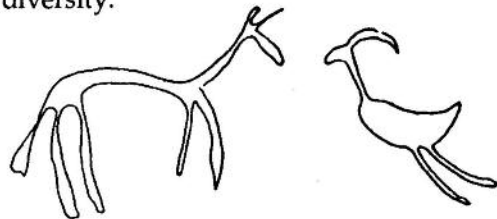
Background:

Anthropology is the comparative study of humans and their behavior. Cultural anthropologists usually study behavior by observing the members of a cultural group as they live their lives and interact with one another. Archaeologists learn about past cultures by analyzing material evidence (sites and artifacts).

All people everywhere have several basic needs which must be met. These basic needs may be categorized as follows:

1. The need for food and water (economics).
2. The need for protection from the elements (clothing and housing).
3. The need to reproduce the culture (marriage, kinship, education).
4. The need for explanation (religion, philosophy, science).

What must be satisfied is universally human. *How* needs are satisfied is cultural. The many different ways that cultures have evolved to meet the basic human needs results in the world's rich cultural diversity.



When studying other cultures, there is a tendency to emphasize the differences among people, and to look at other cultures ethnocentrically. Cultures with less sophisticated forms of technology are frequently portrayed as simple-minded and naive. However, on the contrary, such people often have unequaled understanding, knowledge and adaptability to the environments in which they live. It is important not to accentuate "them" and "us." When scientifically studying other cultures it is necessary to suspend judgment. One culture is neither better nor worse than another, just different. This is the concept of cultural relativism.

A basic assumption of archaeological study is that people who lived in the past had the same basic needs for existence as do people living in the present. Archaeologists are anthropologists who study past cultures by analyzing material remains (artifacts and sites) to learn how people met their basic needs.

Many people mistake archaeology for a swash-buckling "Indiana Jones" adventure, and archaeologists often are thought of as questing after rare and beautiful artifacts. Although it is true that at times archaeologists do find rare and beautiful things, they could more accurately be compared to Sherlock Holmes, a detective of the past, gradually piecing together the culture of a people to understand more about them. A lone artifact discloses very little about a culture. It is by studying many sites and artifacts and their relationship to each other and the environment that one discovers the way people lived. Archaeologists study a people's culture by studying the things they left behind.

Setting the Stage:

1. List on the board students' responses to the following: What do you need to have in order to live?
2. Now, help students categorize their list. They do not have to arrive at the four categories outlined above. Anthropologists themselves do not agree on how to categorize the needs. For example, the students may come up with eight needs: food, water, shelter, clothing, reproduction, transportation, education, and explanation.

Procedure:

1. Distribute the "Comparing Cultures" activity sheet to the students. Write the category of basic needs (food, shelter, etc.) down the vertical column on the chart's left side. Choose another culture to analyze—for example, an East African culture, the culture of Mexico, or any culture with which your students are familiar.
2. The students construct the chart, comparing and contrasting the basic human needs as they are met in different cultures.

3. In a class discussion, the students compare and contrast our culture with others. If different cultures seem strange or inferior to the students, inform them that our culture can be baffling to people from another culture. For example, Hindus are horrified at the thought of eating meat; it is against their religion to do so.

4. Explain that because archaeologists can neither ask the people who left the artifacts how they met their needs, nor observe them using the artifacts, past behavior must be inferred from the material remains of the culture. For example, if corn cobs are present archaeologists could infer that the people were farmers.

Note: Do not single out or make an example of students in your classroom who are from minority ethnic groups. The attention can be embarrassing and hurtful. However, welcome what these students might freely offer to the study of other cultures.

Closure:

As you analyze the chart, what do you notice about the ways cultures meet their basic needs? How do archaeologists study past cultures?

Evaluation:

The students turn in their activity sheets for evaluation.

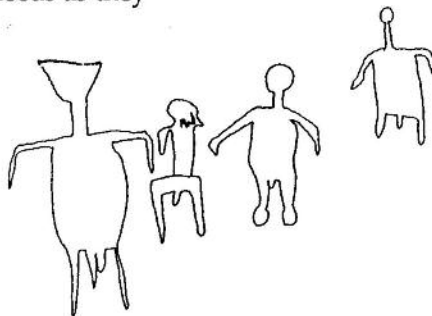
Links:

Section Two, Lesson 15: "Archaeology and Ethnographic Analogy: The Anasazi and the Hopi"

Section Three, Lesson 27: "State Place Names"

Reference:

Braidwood, Robert J., 1967, *Prehistoric Men*. 7th ed. Scott Foresman, Glenview, IL.



Comparing Cultures

Name _____

| Basic Needs | Us | Settlers | |
|-------------|----|----------|--|
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Use additional sheets if necessary.