

CULTURAL INTERDEPENDENCE Study Guide

OVERALL UNIT PLAN

The teaching unit is based on Utopia, or the guiding idea that each of us, if we are dissatisfied with what surrounds us, can create our own cultures. It can be used in an English course, a social studies course, or it can be part of any multidisciplinary unit on societies or group behavior. The amount of what is pulled from these guidelines is up to the individual teacher. It can be modified and adjusted for grade level as deemed necessary.

Students should consider certain “big-issue questions” throughout this unit. It is suitable for older students who are about to enter college or the workforce and for younger students who are struggling with identity and self-esteem.

Many different focal texts can be used. Some to consider are “dystopian” texts: *Fahrenheit 451*, *1984*, *Watchmen*, *V for Vendetta*, *Utopia*, *The Hunger Games*, *Lord of the Flies*, and *Animal Farm*.

The next section of the unit is “The Terrain Game.” Going in order with the Cultural Interdependence Series, the students will be in groups of four to five, and they will create, draw, and design their own society – within the structure of the game and with compromises amid the group. The different elements of the programming (Geography, Economy, Beliefs and Values, and Social Organizations) can be discussed and implemented within the game as it flexes with the students and their needs/interests.

The final project can be an individual one. Each student will create his or her own Utopia/society. This can be print, film, photography, artwork, a play, etc. It can be exactly what they want it to be. Follow-up questions, self-reflections, and discussions can accompany this (such as “What were you willing to compromise for the sake of the group? Where did you stand firm?”).

POSSIBLE MATERIALS INVOLVED

V for Vendetta by Alan Moore and David Lloyd

Utopia by Sir Thomas More (excerpt)

“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high” by Rabindranath Tagore

Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom (excerpt)

“Give” by Anne Frank

FILMS

“Cultural Interdependence” (Four part series)

V for Vendetta (clips)

Ted Koppel’s interviews with Morrie Schwartz (clips)

GUIDING QUESTIONS

What are the influences on a society?

How does a society change?

How do individuals cope when their personal beliefs do not coincide with those of their cultures?

What are the impacts of counter cultures? What are some examples?

What are the impacts of subcultures? What are some examples?

INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMS – VOCABULARY, QUESTIONS, ACTIVITIES

Program One - GEOGRAPHY

Vocabulary: geography, topography, multiculturalism, interdependence, natural resources, climate, renewable resources, nonrenewable resources

1. What do you think when you hear the word "geography"?
2. How would you describe the geography of the area in which you live?
3. How does the geography of your area shape the activities in which you participate?
3. What role do topography, climate, and natural resources play in a society?
4. How can humans alter the topography of an area?
5. What are some natural elements of topography?
6. What is climate? How does climate affect economic factors?
7. What is the difference between a renewable and a nonrenewable resource?

Activities:

1. How are countries moving from nonrenewable to renewable sources of energy? Chart three examples and create a proposal for a "green" energy resource.
2. Create a PSA for a "green" energy campaign, i.e. why reduce, reuse, recycle is still relevant.

Program Two - ECONOMY

Vocabulary: economy, barter, subsistence needs, production, agriculture, service, industry, topography, climate, natural resources, import, export, trade, technology, free market economy, command economy

1. Define technology. How has the definition changed in the last twenty years?
2. Create a twelve-month budget based on the resources you have.
3. How would you describe the economy in which you live? What industries do you see?
4. How do these industries impact people's lives and activities?
5. What are three types of production?
6. How do people from different parts of the world interact with each other? How has this changed? Create a chart that shows different forms of communication and how it has evolved with time.
7. How does technology affect economic activities?
8. Why do some cultures and subcultures choose not to use technology? (i.e. Amish)

Activities:

Investigate the term "globalization." Find three benefits and three downfalls. Form an opinion based on this research. The "fors" will debate the "againsts."

Investigate the term "isolationism." Find three examples of countries who are going or who have gone through phases of isolationism. Create a cause and effect chart for these countries.

Program Three – SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Vocabulary: culture, society, resources, government, family unit, nuclear family, Sufism, Quaker, Oxford University, democracy, monarchy, dictatorship, protest, immigration, communication, language, geography

1. What is the difference between a group and an organization?
2. How do groups and organizations exert their influence?
3. Discuss what kind of culture you fit into.
4. What are some social organizations you belong to? How do they affect your behavior and the activities you participate in?
5. How has your family shaped your perspective on the world?
6. How has your government shaped your perspective on the world?

7. What social organization influences children's moral values, spiritual beliefs, and underlying views and rules for themselves?
8. How has technology changed education? What are the implications of this?
9. What role does government play in our lives? Do you think governments should be more or less involved in the lives of its citizens?
10. How do ethnic groups help immigrants retain their cultural norms?

Activities:

1. Create a multimedia presentation about the top ten technologies that you believe are the most important in human history.
2. Using a world map, chart where certain technologies developed (i.e. gunpowder in China).

Program Four – BELIEFS AND VALUES

Vocabulary: belief, value, judiciary, interdependence, communication, moral, guidelines, technology

Guiding Questions:

1. What are some of the major beliefs and values upon which American was founded? How are those beliefs and values maintained today?
2. What beliefs and values are a part of your community? How have you learned about them as you've grown up?
3. How do beliefs and values influence historical events and the response to conflict or natural disasters throughout the world?
4. How are beliefs and values transmitted between cultures?
5. What formed the basis for much of the American system of democracy?
6. What do cultures value? Provide examples.
7. How does religion influence values and beliefs? What are some examples of this?

Activities:

1. Consider all the different types of communication and technology. Interview someone who grew up without internet, someone who grew up without cell phones, and someone who grew up without TV. Focus on questions that ask how they communicated (i.e. how did people make airline reservations before the internet?).

SUPPLEMENTAL ENCOMPASING ACTIVITY

This is a supplemental, encompassing activity called “The Terrain Game.” Going in order with the Cultural Interdependence Series, the students will be in groups of four to five, and they will create, draw, and design their own society – within the structure of the game and with compromises amid the group. The different elements of the programming (Geography, Economy, Beliefs and Values, and Social Organizations) can be discussed and implemented within the game as it flexes with the students and their needs/interests.

The Terrain Game

The Scenario:

Take a good look around because these are the people with whom you have just joined after a global catastrophe.

While you believe there are other groups, you understand that it is up to you to develop a new society. This society should meet your needs, as you define them, and it should avoid the mistakes of “the old ones” (those who died in the recent tragedy).

Use the questions provided to guide your discussion of how you will set up this new society. Record your answers accurately (record-keeping is crucial for future generations – think of the Founders!).

Each group is located in a different region, and so each group must acclimate to the different terrain, resources, and overall environment.

Roles:

Interrogator/Economist: Ask questions one at a time. Keep group moving along, as well as keep track and plan budget.

Archivist: Record any group response to each question as well as additional information. Document specific events, comments, etc.

Map specialist: Keep group aware of geography and natural resources of the land to help group develop a realistic economy. Works closely with Economist.

Diplomatic Advisor: Make sure answers do not conflict with one another and that they are consistent with the economic plan. Ask questions to help group develop more specific answers. Consider what other groups may be doing and planning.

Setting Up:

Economic Plan

1. What is your economic goal (think of class discussions on societies, i.e. capitalism, socialism, combination)?
2. What will be produced? How will it be produced? For whom will it be produced?
3. Who will make the decisions?
4. What will be your government?

Land/Distribution/Location

1. Will the land be privately owned? If so, who gets it and how?
2. Should the land be owned by everyone?
3. Should you divide it up and distribute it? If so, should it be divided equally? What constitutes equal?
4. Where in the terrain will you live? Draw this on the map.
5. Should you consider the needs of the environment? How?
6. Who has rights to the water?

Labor

1. What work must be done?
2. List the kinds of jobs required to sustain the life you desire.
3. Who should do these jobs?
4. What about the jobs nobody likes?
5. Does each person have one job or many?

Land

1. What natural resources will be used to produce goods?
2. Will there be rules governing use of natural resources? Why or why not?

Capital (Money)

1. What kinds of capital (tools, machines, etc.) will be used to produce goods? How will you build/find/create these things?

Basic Needs

1. Are there some basic needs that you believe should be guaranteed for all? If so, what are they? Or do you think that individuals should secure their needs by themselves?
2. Who will enforce the laws? Will there be laws? Who decides what they are?

Now, create a name for your group that reflects the types of systems that you have developed.

Here are some additional issues to consider:

Population and Consumption

You notice that your natural resources are becoming overused and studies indicate that your society is consuming more than can be sustained in the long run. Do you consider the needs of future generations? How do you deal with a growing population and the over-consumptive habits of the old society?

Non-Material Economy

Some people want to devote themselves to philosophical thinking, poetry, art, and spiritual development. Are these valid ways to make a living in your society? Are they contributing to society in any way? How should their contributions be acknowledged or rewarded? What does it mean to be a healthy and productive citizen?

Welfare

Some of the members of your group had various social problems (drug addiction, mental illness) when you arrived. These people do not work very hard, at least for now, and need special medical care and psychological help. Will the other members of the society provide for these individuals' needs? How and for what length of time?

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