

Title: Culture Regions of the U.S.

Sub-Strand F—Spatial Organization

Standard: The student will describe and provide examples of the primary factors behind the regional pattern of culture groups in the United States and the world.

Benchmark 4: Students will cite a variety of examples that illustrate how landscapes reflect the cultural characteristics of their inhabitants.

Grade Level:

9-12 only for the high school course.

Overview: Students will look at a variety of images from a variety of sources to discern landscape clues about different cultural groups and how they alter their landscapes. Specifically, students will be able to differentiate between retirement communities, rural agricultural communities and suburban areas.

Time: Three 55-minute class periods.

Subjects: Human Geography.

Required Materials:

1. A recent, decent atlas. (Goode's is good)
2. A current Human Geography thematic text.
3. A blank map of the United States for each student.
4. Internet access.

Objectives: Students will be able to identify the location of different cultural groups of the United States (agricultural, retirement, urban, etc.) Students will analyze the correlation between the landscape of a given region and the type of settlement.

Suggested Procedure:

Day One: Open the lesson with a discussion regarding the notion that there is a reason why people live where they do. Initially, site and situation characteristics of a place greatly influenced settlement, as did mobility issues. For example, the Twin Cities grew as a settlement because of their location (along the Mississippi) and their relationship to other places. Land use has changed over time for many reasons, such as; populations have shifted and needs have changed. To understand today's distribution of cultural groups it helps to know a bit about the settlement history of a place. (See Extension activity) For example, if you asked your students why so many retired people live in the south, they will probably tie in temperature (climate) to their answer. Or, if you asked why so few people lived in western Colorado they would probably cite the elevation or rugged terrain as reasons. For another example, ask your students why there are not a lot of people who live in Alaska, and they may cite reasons of harsh climate or distance from the Lower 48, etc.

From the opening discussion, put three terms on display: **Retirement, Suburb and Farming**. Under each heading, ask for input regarding images that come to mind when the students think of those terms. (Suggestion - record answers under the term on the board) For example, when students hear/see the term “Retirement” they may think of the following: old people, assisted living, healthcare, shuffleboard, etc. For “Suburb” they may think of the following: families, detached housing, malls, parks and bike paths, etc. For “Farming” they may think of the following: acres of planted crops, animals, tractors, flat, low population density, etc. We may take these images for granted as part of the normal existence of things, but upon closer inspection, students can start to examine these notions. Have students develop their lists individually or in groups. At the end of the class have some format where students can exchange ideas.

Day Two – Collecting and mapping data. Give each student a blank map of the United States. Using your resources available to you, collect information. For information on where people aged 65 and over are living, go to <http://www.census.gov/> (Census Bureau homepage) and **click** on “American FactFinder,” then **click** on “Data Sets,” then **click** on “List all maps.” From there select what maps you wish to view. For example, to gather data on retirement, select the map, “TM-PO20 Percent of Persons 65 Years and Over: 2000.” This shows Florida with the highest percent of people 65 and over by state. For a closer look, you could go back and select Florida by county to get a better idea of distribution within the state. Have students map the top states with the highest percentage of people over the age of 65 (after Florida, in alphabetical order comes Arkansas, Iowa, Maine, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota and West Virginia.) Help students understand why Arizona, California and Texas don’t show up as high, when we assume many seniors move their to retire. (It is because they are looking at total percents and CA, TX has a lot of young people, too.) For information on farming, consult an atlas such as Goode’s, or the on-line 2002 Census of Agriculture from the USDA. (<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/census02/volume1/us/index1.htm>) For an on-line map, check out the Census Bureau’s 1992 Tiger map, “Land in Farms as Percent of Land Area” (<http://www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/ag064.pdf>) For information on suburbs, again reference the Census Bureau on-line. Although it is near impossible to find data that distinguishes between urban and suburban, refer to any Human Geography text for information regarding urban geography. You’ll find that suburbs are distinguished from inner cities (Central Business Districts) For on-line maps of urban/suburban areas, refer once again to the Census Bureau.

Day Three – Students should put together posters/collages that reflect the various cultural landscapes using images, drawings, words they locate or produce.

Suggested Assessment: Poster/Collage assignment. Have students create (individually or in groups) a set of posters that reflect landscapes representing these three settings: a retirement community; a suburb, and an agricultural community. Have them cut out images/words that reflect the different landscapes.

RESOURCES

National Geography Standards:

PLACES AND REGIONS:

STANDARD 4: The physical and human characteristics of places.

STANDARD 5: That people create regions to interpret Earth's complexity.

STANDARD 6: How culture and experience influence people's perception of places and regions.

Supplemental Web Links for Teachers and Students:

<http://www.census.gov/> Homepage for the U.S. Census Bureau – don't leave home without it!

<http://www.usda.gov/nass/> National Agricultural Statistics Service - links to the various Agricultural Censuses.

<http://biology.usgs.gov/luhna/> The USGS site on land use, specifically of North America.

Extension Activities - Have students read about the history of land use in North America in the article, "Toward a Land-Use History of North America: A Context for Understanding Environmental Change," by Thomas D. Sisk

<http://biology.usgs.gov/luhna/> This site by the USGS includes the Land Use History of North America (LUHNA) – it is focused on the U.S. The following chapter, "Historical Interrelationships Between Population Settlement and Farmland in the Conterminous United States, 1790 to 1992," by Margaret Maizel, gives an excellent view of how interrelated population growth and agricultural land use are.

Credits

Jeanne Kranz

Human Geography

Como Park H. S.

St. Paul, MN 55117
