

GEOGRAPHY STANDARD 10: The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics



Image credit: D.J. Zeigler

Both boys and men wear traditional Sikh turbans. This group is resting at the Sikh Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, one of the most magnificent temple complexes in New Delhi.



Image credit: D.J. Zeigler

Bright colors and geometric designs decorate the traditional fishing boats in Malta's harbors.

The geographically informed person must understand that culture is an intricate and complex idea. As the learned behavior of people, culture shapes each group's way of life and its own view of itself and other groups. An increasingly interdependent world results in different culture groups coming into contact more than ever before. Thus, it becomes essential to understand the characteristics and spatial distribution of Earth's cultural mosaics.

Therefore, Standard 10 contains these themes: Characteristics of Culture, Patterns of Culture, and Cultural Diffusion and Change.

Culture is a complex, multifaceted concept encompassing social structures, languages, belief systems, institutions, technology, art, architecture, dress, foods, and traditions of groups of humans. Each cultural group has a way of life that often results in landscapes and regions with distinctive features. Language, for example, represents and reflects many aspects of a culture and can be analyzed for clues about the values and beliefs of a culture group. Cultural landscapes may overlap, thus forming elaborate mosaics of peoples, places, and environments that can exist at various spatial scales.

Whichever characteristic of culture is considered, it is clear that the mosaics of cultural landscapes on Earth are not static. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected and interdependent, cultural groups have greater and more varied contacts with each other. This increased contact influences the way in which people can reject or borrow, adopt, and adapt new ideas, thus reshaping the characteristics of a cultural region. Culture changes as a result of the migration of people, the diffusion of ideas, and the development of new technologies. The processes of cultural change accelerate with improvements in transportation and communication. Cultures have borrowed attributes from other cultures whether knowingly or not, willingly or not, permanently or not. Cultures change and even disappear as old ways of doing things die out in response to the homogenizing forces of modern society.

As members of a multicultural society, students must understand the diverse spatial expressions of culture. Understanding these themes enables students to place their own cultural background and heritage into the context of a constantly changing multicultural world as well as to recognize and respect other cultures that may be different from their own.

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4th GRADE

the student knows and understands:

Characteristics of Culture

1. A culture has distinctive characteristics

Therefore, the student is able to:

A. Identify and describe the characteristics of a culture, as exemplified by being able to

▶ Identify and describe distinctive characteristics of their own cultural heritage (e.g., cuisine or agricultural products, traditional festivals or celebrations, vocabulary terms that locals would know and understand but outsiders might find confusing).

▶ Identify and describe the distinctive characteristics of current US cultures (e.g., spoken and written languages, social organizations, beliefs and customs, forms of architecture, educational systems).

▶ Identify and describe the distinctive cultural characteristics of groups that immigrated to the United States in the past.

8th GRADE

the student knows and understands:

Characteristics of Culture

1. There are many different cultures, each with its own distinctive characteristics

Therefore, the student is able to:

A. Compare the cultural characteristics of different cultures, as exemplified by being able to

▶ Compare examples of distinctive cultural characteristics that can be observed in different neighborhoods in the local community.

▶ Describe and explain how a cultural characteristic from one culture may be adopted in another culture (e.g., sushi bar at a truck stop, African drumming patterns in US music, cultural holiday customs practiced in new locations).

▶ Describe and explain the spatial patterns of different cultural characteristics across regions or countries (e.g., the pattern of languages and dialects within a country, the architectural styles predominant in rural areas of European countries, the worldwide distribution of different religions).

12th GRADE

the student knows and understands:

Characteristics of Culture

1. Cultural systems provide contexts for living in and viewing the world

Therefore, the student is able to:

A. Describe and explain the characteristics that constitute any particular cultural system (e.g., Amish, Japanese, Maori), as exemplified by being able to

▶ Describe and explain how the extended family networks and limited use of technology influence the Amish culture in the United States.

▶ Describe and explain the historical role of the caste system and arranged marriages in the Indian cultural system.

▶ Explain how local customs can contribute to a group's culture (e.g., lion hunting by Masai cattle herders in East Africa, outrigger canoe navigation by Pacific Island cultures).

B. Explain how different cultures provide contexts from which people may view the world differently, as exemplified by being able to

▶ Describe and explain how a current event might be viewed differently from the context of different cultures (e.g., the results of a US presidential election, the impact of a natural disaster such as Hurricane Katrina or a tsunami in the Indian Ocean, the global spread of US companies such as Wal-Mart, Starbucks, or McDonalds).

▶ Explain how cultures may view the roles of women in society differently.

▶ Explain how cultures may have differing views of business practices (e.g., markets where prices are negotiated rather than fixed, bartering for goods versus purchasing them).



Spices for sale at a local market in Egypt are reflective of cultural traditions in food preparation.

Image credit: Rik Katz

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4th GRADE

the student knows and understands:

Patterns of Culture

2. Cultures leave imprints on the physical environment in the form of cultural markers

Therefore, the student is able to:

- A. Identify and describe examples of cultural markers (e.g., buildings, place names, monuments), as exemplified by being able to
 - ▶ Identify and describe the names of businesses in the local community that indicate a connection to a culture.
 - ▶ Identify and describe the place names of streets and buildings in the local community that may be connected to a cultural group that lived in the local area at some prior time.
 - ▶ Identify examples of different religious or institutional structures in the community and describe the connections to cultural groups in the community.



Catholic Spanish missions such as this one in Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico were constructed throughout the southwestern United States using local adobe building materials.

8th GRADE

the student knows and understands:

Patterns of Culture

2. Multiple cultural landscapes exist and vary across space

Therefore, the student is able to:

- A. Explain how a cultural landscape is the physical expression of a culture, as exemplified by being able to
 - ▶ Describe how human settlements and archaeological remains illustrate the human imprint on the physical environments they occupied (e.g., the Cahokia Mounds left by Native Americans in southern Illinois, Pompeii ruins in Italy as a result of the volcanic eruption in ancient times, speculation about the stone statuary on Easter Island).
 - ▶ Describe the architectural styles of residential structures in selected world regions and explain how differences in the structures reflect differences in the respective cultures (e.g., yurts in Mongolia, pueblos in the American Southwest, villas in Italy).
 - ▶ Identify the place names of towns in a particular region and explain how they serve as cultural markers on the landscape (e.g., US town names connected to prior European homelands, locations with names from an indigenous language, names of immigrant settlements).
- B. Compare different cultural landscapes, as exemplified by being able to
 - ▶ Identify and compare the spatial patterns of retail sales areas in different cultural regions (e.g., suburban malls surrounded by large parking areas in the United States, densely packed pedestrian markets or souks in North Africa, floating markets on the rivers of Southeast Asia).
 - ▶ Compare the cultural landscapes of urban and suburban residential areas in terms of the amount of space, population density, and horizontal versus vertical use of space.
 - ▶ Compare the cultural landscapes of indigenous peoples with the societies that replaced them (e.g., the Sami people versus Nordic peoples, the Maori versus European settlements, South African !Kung versus Dutch settlements).

12th GRADE

the student knows and understands:

Patterns of Culture

2. Cultural landscapes exist at multiple scales

Therefore the student is able to:

- A. Identify and analyze the spatial patterns of cultural landscapes at multiple scales, as exemplified by being able to
 - ▶ Describe the cultural landscapes of two large cities in the United States and analyze the commonalities and differences of their built environments (e.g., Boston versus Los Angeles, Seattle versus Phoenix).
 - ▶ Describe and analyze the characteristics of the cultural landscapes of different neighborhoods in a city (e.g., architectural styles, signage for businesses, density of the residents, amount of green space, type of economic activities conducted there).
 - ▶ Analyze and explain the varying impacts of tourism on local cultural landscapes (e.g., cruise ship ports of call such as Prince Edward Island, Cozumel, and Venice; crowds at Angkor Wat with the needs of the local residents; ecotourism impacts versus highly commercialized resorts).
- B. Explain differences in the human imprints on the physical environment of different cultures, as exemplified by being able to
 - ▶ Explain how predominant agricultural practices in different cultures result in different imprints on the physical environment (e.g., forest removal for cattle ranches in the Amazon, terrace construction for rice farming in China, changes in land use patterns as a result of center pivot irrigation in the western United States).
 - ▶ Explain examples of the imprints on the physical environment of past cultures (e.g., the landscape of Egypt with pyramids and irrigation, Mayan temples and agricultural fields, Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellings and field systems).
 - ▶ Explain the differences in selected North American cultural hearths and how they influenced settlements (e.g., the French in the lower St. Lawrence Valley, the English and Africans in the southern Tidewater region, the Spanish in Mexico).

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4th GRADE

the student knows and understands:

Cultural Diffusion and Change

3. Cultures change and diffuse in multiple ways

Therefore, the student is able to:

- A. Describe examples of changes in a culture, as exemplified by being able to
- ▶ Describe how the introduction of new technologies may create change in a culture (e.g., television, cellular or mobile phone, Internet).
 - ▶ Describe how increased educational opportunities may result in changes in a culture.
 - ▶ Describe how increasing employment opportunities for women create changes in a culture.
- B. Describe examples of the spread of a culture, as exemplified by being able to
- ▶ Describe how different cultural groups bring their cultural traditions (e.g., food, holidays, clothing, religion) with them when they move to new locations.
 - ▶ Describe how culture may spread as a result of increased communications technologies (e.g., television, films, Internet).
 - ▶ Describe how cultural arts and artifacts can spread through travel, education, and international marketing (e.g., weaving and cloth making, baskets, paintings, body adornment, sculptures).

8th GRADE

the student knows and understands:

Cultural Diffusion and Change

3. Changes in cultural characteristics and the distribution of cultures result from migration of people and the diffusion of ideas and technology

Therefore, the student is able to:

- A. Describe and explain the processes of cultural diffusion, as exemplified by being able to
- ▶ Describe and explain how connections between cultures may result in the sharing of cultural characteristics (e.g., migration, travel, educational exchange programs).
 - ▶ Describe and explain how the increased knowledge and use of a common language increases the opportunities for cultural diffusion.
 - ▶ Identify the origins of different music genres and describe the spatial role of music in cultural diffusion (e.g., Latin Salsa music, Jazz and Blues music, rock and roll music).
- B. Explain the diffusion of a cultural characteristic, such as religious belief, music style, and architecture, as exemplified by being able to
- ▶ Explain how the diffusion of Islam followed trade routes through North Africa and into Europe.
 - ▶ Explain how jazz music developed in the southern United States and then spread north primarily to cities along the Mississippi River.
 - ▶ Explain how the spread of religious structures follow from processes of colonization (e.g., Catholic cathedrals and missions spread from Europe to the New World as a result of European exploration and colonization).

12th GRADE

the student knows and understands:

Cultural Diffusion and Change

3. Cultures change through convergence and/or divergence

Therefore, the student is able to:

- A. Identify and explain examples of cultural convergence, as exemplified by being able to
- ▶ Explain examples of the spread of culture traits that contribute to cultural convergence due to globalization (e.g., US-based fast-food franchises in China and India, the dominance of the English language for use in business, replication of television programs or print media in other countries).
 - ▶ Analyze the ways technology contributes to cultural convergence on a global scale (e.g., role of television, the Internet, more affordable air travel, cellular or mobile phone technology).
 - ▶ Explain how multinational corporations and international business operations contribute to cultural convergence.
- B. Identify and explain examples of cultural divergence, as exemplified by being able to
- ▶ Identify and explain examples of immigrant cultural groups maintaining language or other cultural markers in a new location to distinguish themselves from other groups.
 - ▶ Explain how subculture groups in the United States adopt dress or other characteristics to distinguish themselves from other groups (e.g., Harley-Davidson motorcycle riders, Goths, the Amish).
 - ▶ Identify and explain how different types of housing styles and developments may contribute to cultural divergence (e.g., gated communities retirement communities, suburban developments with home owner association covenants).

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Image credit: D.J. Zeigler



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US fast-food has diffused into distant parts of the world, adapting to new cultures in the process. Subway is found in Amman, Jordan (top left); Pizza Hut in Beersheba, Israel (lower left); and a culturally modified Ronald McDonald in Bangkok, Thailand.



Image credit: D.J. Zeigler

12th GRADE

the student knows and understands:

Cultural Diffusion and Change

4. The rate of cultural change has increased as a result of globalization

Therefore, the student is able to:

- A. Explain how and why globalization has increased the rate of change in cultures, as exemplified by being able to
 - ▶ Explain how media, such as television, music, and films, can influence the rate of change in cultures around the world (e.g., youth preferences for types of music, knowledge of India diffused through the Indian film industry).
 - ▶ Explain how the increased mobility of people, ideas, and information can result in increasing the rate of change in a culture (e.g., the spread of Internet social networking, development of smart phones and short-message-service [SMS] texting).
 - ▶ Explain how the increasing economic interdependence in the world may result in an increased rate of change in cultures (e.g., expanding use of the Internet as an international marketing tool, increased frequency of business and trade shows involving people from across the world, changes in peoples' diets due to the spread of US fast-food franchises).

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Image credit: D.J. Zeigler

The cultural landscape of the Brickfields area of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, has its roots in southern India. Traditional Indian shapes and colors are supplemented by popular Indian films from Bollywood, and the forces of globalization as exemplified by the presence of Western Union.