
Lesson 1.2

CULTURE EVERYWHERE



Ceramic pot from Cherokee County,
North Carolina, ca. AD 1770.

Subjects: social studies, language arts.

Skills: knowledge, comprehension, analysis, evaluation.

Strategies: brainstorming, categorize, compare and contrast, discussion, reading.

Duration: 30 to 45 minutes.

Class Size: any.

Objectives

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

- show the different ways that cultures meet basic human needs; and
- recognize that archaeologists study how people from past cultures met basic needs by analyzing and interpreting the artifacts and sites that they left behind.

Materials

“Comparing Cultures” activity sheet for each student. “Glimpses of Indian Life” narrative.

Vocabulary

Anthropologist: a scholar who practices anthropology—the comparative study of human culture, behavior, and biology, and of how these change through time.

Anthropology: the comparative study of human culture, behavior, and biology, and of how these change through time. Archaeology is often considered a specialty within anthropology.

Archaeology: a method for studying past human cultures based on material evidence (artifacts and sites). Archaeology is often practiced as a subfield of anthropology.

Archaeologist: a scientist who seeks to understand past human cultures by careful study of the artifacts and other evidence from archaeological sites.

Cultural relativism: understanding other cultures in their own terms without making judgments about them.

Culture: the set of learned beliefs, values, styles, and behaviors generally shared by members of a society or group. “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 own traditions, customs, language, and values are the only right and proper way, and that those of other cultures are inadequate or wrong.

Background

Anthropology is the comparative study of humans and their *cultures*. Cultural *anthropologists* usually conduct their studies by observing the members of a cultural group as they live their lives and interact with one another. *Archaeologists* are anthropologists who study cultures by analyzing material evidence (artifacts and sites). Most archaeologists study past cultures, but

some archaeologists use the same methods to study living cultures. Among the questions archaeologists seek answers to are: How are cultures different? How are they alike?

Anthropologists have learned that all people everywhere have basic needs that must be met. Some of these basic needs, like food and water, literally keep body chemistry going. Others kinds of basic needs transcend those required for physical well being, but are just as important to people's lives. Most anthropologists believe, for example, that sociability is a basic need because people tend to die in isolation. While not the food or water required to keep the human body functioning, sociability is an important part of survival.

A fundamental 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. Using the broad (physical and social) category of basic needs, these needs may be outlined as follows:

- the need for food and water (subsistence);
- the need for protection from the elements (clothing and housing);
- the need to reproduce the culture (marriage, kinship, education);
- the need for explanation (religion, philosophy, science);
- the need to communicate (language, art, music).

What needs 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 only 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; it is just different. This is the concept of *cultural relativism*.

Many people mistake *archaeology* for a swashbuckling "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. They are detectives—detectives of the past, who gradually piece 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. After the students have brainstormed, help them categorize their list. They do not have to arrive at the five 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 categories of basic needs the students identified during their brainstorming (food, shelter, etc.) down the

vertical column on the chart’s left side.

2. Read “Glimpses of Indian Life,” based on John Lawson’s journals of his survey trip through the Carolinas in 1701. This will familiarize the students with some aspects of Native American life in North Carolina when European colonists were living in towns along the coast. You can also choose a third culture to analyze and compare—for example, the culture of Mexico or an East African culture, or any culture with which your students are familiar.

3. The students construct the chart, filling in how the basic human needs are met in the different cultures.

4. In a class discussion, students compare and contrast the cultures. If the different cultures seem strange or inferior to the students, inform them that our culture can be baffling to people from another culture. For example, today’s Hindus are horrified at the thought of eating meat; it is against their religion to do so. When European colonists arrived, many Indian tribes in North Carolina were egalitarian. They made decisions through consensus, or agreement, of a council. Native Americans were puzzled when Europeans wanted to deal with a single “leader” whose voice could dictate how things were done.

5. 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 guess that the people were farmers.

Note: The students may not find the information they need from “Glimpses of Indian Life” to fill in *all* the blanks. Discuss why this may be so. For example, perhaps the author only chose to highlight certain things from Lawson’s journal, or the Indian people Lawson visited and wrote about chose not to give him certain information about their beliefs, religion, or other aspects of their lives. Therefore, the author who condensed Lawson’s account did not have access to that information either. Also, 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 and/or historians discover how people met basic human needs in the past?

Evaluation

Students turn in their activity sheets for evaluation.

Links

Lesson 2.11: “Inference by Analogy.”

Lesson 4.7: “North Carolina Place Names.”

Sources

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

Lawson, John. 1967 [orig. 1709]. *A New Voyage to Carolina*, edited by Hugh Talmage Lefler. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Smith, Shelley J., Jeanne M. Moe, Kelly A. Letts, and Danielle M. Paterson. 1993. *Intrigue of the Past: A Teacher’s Activity Guide for Fourth through Seventh Grades*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior. [This lesson is adapted from

INTRIGUE OF THE PAST

“Culture Everywhere” on pp. 11–13, courtesy of the Bureau of Land Management.]
Ward, H. Trawick, and R. P. Stephen Davis, Jr. 1999. *Time Before History: The Archaeology of North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. [The image in this lesson’s main heading is taken from Figure 7.14.]

Comparing Cultures

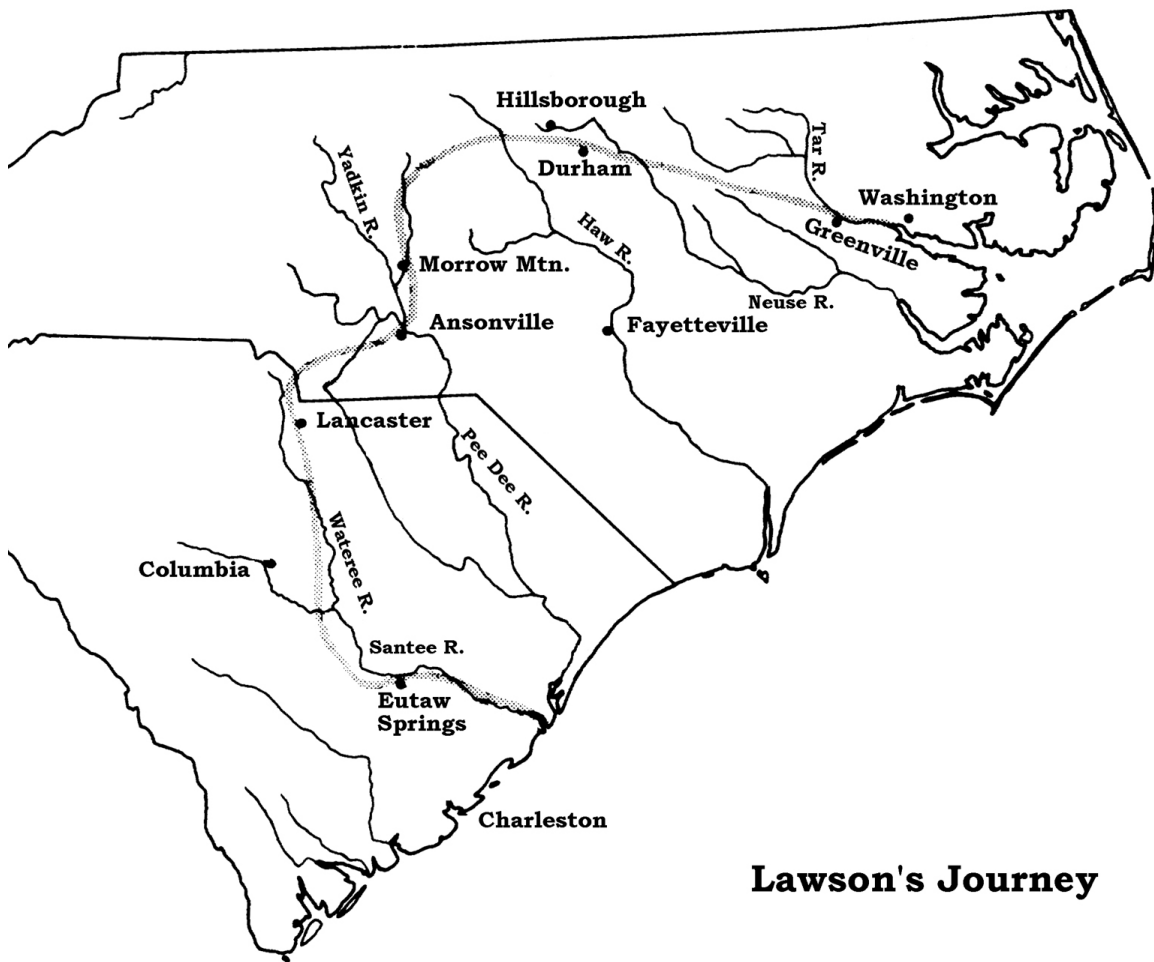
Name: _____

Basic Needs	How Basic Needs Are Met in Current American Culture	How Basic Needs Are Met in 18th-century N.C. Indian Cultures	How Basic Needs Are Met in: _____

Glimpses of Indian Life, AD 1700

Background

By the 1700s, English colonists had settled in places along the coasts of Virginia and the Carolinas. Their towns included Williamsburg, Virginia and Charleston, South Carolina. Colonial officials in Charleston wanted to know more about the land and the native peoples living in the interior. They asked an Englishman named John Lawson to survey and explore the area. Lawson agreed and left Charleston on December 28, 1700. He took with him five other Englishmen, three Indian men, and one Indian woman. Weaving through the heart of the Carolinas to finish near where Greenville, North Carolina is today, Lawson's journey lasted 59 days. As he traveled, Lawson wrote about the different Indian peoples he met. The following account is based on some of Lawson's observations as he went from village to village.



Lawson's Journey

Lawson's Account

The Indians of North Carolina are of different heights and builds, as the Europeans are. They speak many different languages. Each day, they do the work they need to do to live. Wild plant foods like nuts and berries are gathered; gardens of corn and squash are planted, tended, and harvested; tools, clay pottery, and clothes are made; and animals, like deer and turkey, are hunted for meat. They find and process the plants they need to cure diseases and treat wounds. For example, some people use the oil of acorns to soothe burns.

The people live in villages scattered across the region. Some villages are large and some are small. Some have tall wood fences surrounding them, and others do not. Many villages are along streams and rivers. There is water to drink and water to travel on. The land in these places is easy to work with stone hoes or digging sticks, and the soft soils make fertile gardens for the corn and squash crops. In some places, pumpkins grow and peach trees offer shade as well as fruit. The villagers eat these foods from their gardens with the meats the hunters bring. Venison, which is deer meat, and wild turkey are the meats people eat the most. Many wild plant foods and herbs are gathered, too, which add to the food stores; hickory nuts and acorns; strawberries and blackberries; and grapes and wild onions, to name a few.

Foods like venison and turkey give the people more than meat. Women clean deer skins and use the hides to make clothes and blankets. They weave turkey feathers into soft capes people wear over their shoulders. Many of the animal bones are shaped into tools; turkey bones make good awls, which are tools used to punch holes into tough hides.

In the villages, many of the houses are round or oval. They are covered with cypress, cedar, or pine bark. When people build their houses, they make long poles of any wood that bends. The poles are actually small tree trunks only about three to six inches thick. After they cut the trees and take off the bark and limbs, the people heat the poles in a fire to strengthen them. Then they put the poles side by side in the ground to make the shape of the house they want. The tops of the poles are bent toward the center and tied together by cord made from elm bark or a tough moss that never rots. Finally, the poles of the roof and walls are covered with bark to make the houses warm and tight for the winter. In the summer, the people may leave the walls uncovered to let air come through and cool the house. A hole is left in the center of the roof so that smoke from the hearth inside the house can escape.

At times during the year, people leave their villages and gather together in one place to have feasts and to buy and sell items they want, such as deer skins for clothes or shell for jewelry. It is much like the European markets and fairs. Some people come from as far away as 60 miles. Besides getting the goods they need, the people play games. One game is a sort of arithmetic. Two players use a pack of 51 thin reeds that are about 7 inches long. When they play, one person takes the pack and tosses some of the reeds high into the air. Before the reeds come down, each player has to guess how many reeds are in the air and how many remain in the hand of the person who threw them.

The Indians have different kinds of dances and songs. Some are for war and some celebrate peace. Others honor respected elders. Others are done when people marry. Usually, these kinds of dances and songs are composed especially for the celebration and are not used again. At other celebrations, people use time-honored songs and dances whose words and music always stay the same. When the Harvest of Corn festival ends, for example, the people give thanks for their crops with a special song and dance to the Good Spirit.

Because there are different tribes, marriage customs differ among the Indian people. Lawson tells us about the custom in one tribe; he does not name the tribe. He writes that before people get

married, the man asks the woman's parents if he can marry her. The parents say they will think about it, and the man leaves. He knows, though, that the parents expect him to return. When he does, he brings his relatives along to talk with all the woman's relatives. At the meeting, everybody gives an opinion about whether the match is a good one. If the families agree it is, the marriage is arranged. The man must pay the woman's family for her. Often the payment is in deerskins. He pays because the woman is a good worker, and the family will miss her contribution. He also shows by giving deerskins that he is a good hunter and can provide meat for his family. The woman must agree to the arrangement; she cannot be married unless she wants to.

Death is a time of sadness and people bury their dead with ceremony. Just like at a European wake, some Indian peoples Lawson writes about keep vigil over the body for a time. Later they bury the person with some of the tools and possessions the person used in life. At a man's funeral, people in the village gather, grieve, and listen while a conjurer (who is a priest) tells about the things the man did and what he was like. Because the man was a skilled hunter and loved his village, the conjurer tells the people that he has gone into the Country of Souls. This is a place (like heaven) where a good person goes after death and all wants are satisfied. People who are lazy, bad hunters, or thieves go to a place where snakes crawl and the food is nasty.