



Unit 2 – *The U.S. American Way*





Unit 2: The U.S. American Way examines the identity and origin of U.S. Americans and how others in the world perceive U.S. Americans.

Pre- and Post-assessments

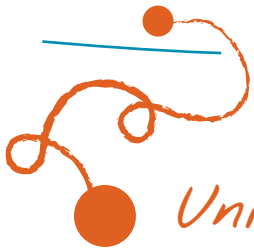
Pre-assessment:

- Before starting the unit, make a copy of the [Talking Drawings I](#) organizer for each student in your class.
- On the first day of the unit, ask students to think about things that represent culture. Give students 2 minutes to think silently.
- Afterwards, pass out the [Talking Drawings I](#) organizer to students.
- Instruct students to draw graphic depictions of things that represent culture in the box provided.
- Allow students approximately 10 minutes to create their graphic depictions.
- Ask each student to partner with a student nearby.
- Explain to partners that they will each take 2 minutes to talk about their drawings in order to explain how their images represent culture.
- After partners have shared, allow them 5 minutes to record differences between their “talking drawings.”
- Collect all [Talking Drawings I](#) organizers and save them for use at the end of the three-week unit.

Post-Assessment:

- At the end of the unit, make a copy of the [Talking Drawings II](#) organizer for each student in your class.
- On the last day of the unit, ask students to think about things that represent culture. Give students 2 minutes to think silently.
- Afterwards, pass out the [Talking Drawings II](#) organizer to students.
- Instruct students to draw graphic depictions of things that represent culture in the box provided.
- Allow students approximately 10 minutes to create their graphic depictions.
- Then, pass out students’ original [Talking Drawings I](#) organizers.
- Ask students to compare their two drawings by sharing with a partner for 2 minutes. Partners should discuss differences between their first and second versions.
- After partners have shared, allow them 5 minutes to record the differences between their first and second drawings in the space provided on their [Talking Drawings II](#) organizers.
- As a class, discuss differences between students’ two versions of Talking Drawings. Ask students how their ideas of culture and its influence on behavior, communication and perspectives have changed.
- Differences that students identify will represent additional knowledge they have gained about culture in relation to other world cultures. If there is time, group differences into categories in order to identify patterns of learning.

To view the Standards Alignment for this unit [click here](#).



Unit 2 - The U.S. American Way



Essential Questions

1. What is the definition of and who is a U.S. American?
2. How accurate are our perceptions of another culture?
3. What are the origins of U.S. culture?
4. What does our language tell us about our culture?
5. How are U.S. Americans perceived globally?



Word Sense



Essential terms for students to know to understand content in the unit.

U.S.	American
Stereotype	Generalization
Ancestry	



Geo Locations

Continents, regions, countries, and cities used in the unit activities.

United States





Resources – Print

Althen, G., Doran, A., & Szmania, S. J. (2003). *American ways: A guide for foreigners in the United States.* Boston, MA: Intercultural Press.

Covering customs, cultural values, politics, education, religion, sports, communication and many other topics, this book offers keen insight into aspects of U.S. American society that often remain hidden to its residents.

Smith, D. J. (2009). *If America were a village: A book about the people of the United States.* Toronto, Canada: Kids Can Press, Ltd.

This book reduces the population of the United States to a village of 100 people in order to make statistics related to age, race, religion and many other factors meaningful to young learners.

Weinstein, A. & Rubel, D. (2002). *The story of America: Freedom and crisis from settlement to superpower.* New York, NY: DK Publishing.

An overview of the people and events that have shaped the United States.



Resources – web

Smithsonian.

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/>

This site offers engaging information, photos, videos and games related to history, archaeology, travel, people, places, science, nature, arts and pop culture.

Helping students see American culture differently. *Global Playground Teacher Tool Kit.*

<http://theglobalplayground.org/marketing/downloads/TeacherToolkit.pdf>

This PDF guide includes a lesson plan (p. 9-12) based on The Sacred Rac, by Pat Hughes, that helps students see American culture from a very different perspective and addresses essential question number two.

The anti-Americans (a hate/love relationship). *America at a Crossroads.*

http://www.pbs.org/weta/crossroads/about/show_anti-americans.html

These short video clips, featuring non-Americans talking about their perceptions of the United States, support essential question number five. Teacher tip: Some film clips are more appropriate than others. Screen film clips carefully before allowing students to view them. Carefully frame contexts and purposes of the clips so as not to shed negative light on non-Americans. Recommended clips: French Children on America and An Opinionated London Dinner Party.

The things we say: Culture in casual expressions. *Peace Corps: Worldwide Schools Culture Matters.*

<http://files.peacecorps.gov/www/interactive/culturematters/Ch2/thingswesayparttwo.html>

This online activity supports essential question number four. It examines how cultural values are expressed through common expressions and sayings.

Sources of American culture. *Peace Corps: Worldwide Schools Culture Matters.*

<http://files.peacecorps.gov/www/interactive/culturematters/Ch2/sourcesamculture.html>

In this online activity, students investigate four defining features of the United States and the traits that stem from them. The activity supports essential question number three.



By the Numbers

Statistics that relate to this unit can be located in the following resources:

The World Factbook. *Central Intelligence Agency.*

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>

America's children: Key national indicators of well-being, 2013. *Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics.*

<http://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/index.asp>



Journal or Blog Activity

Read the statement below. In your journal or blog, react to one or more of the questions provided.

Some people refer to the United States as a "melting pot," while others consider the U.S. a "cultural salad."

- What are some arguments for and against each of these terms?
- How else could the diversity of the U.S. be represented?



Perspective Taking

Imagine that an alien from outer space has just landed his/her spaceship in front of your school. This alien knows nothing about your culture, and you know nothing about the alien's culture.

- What are five things that you would tell the alien about your culture?
- What are five things that you would like to ask the alien about the alien's culture?

Note to teacher: Students are likely to make many assumptions about what an alien knows or doesn't know. In the questions, challenge students to include descriptions and definitions for things. For instance, when answering the first question, if the student references traditional U.S. foods without explaining what "food" is, they are assuming that the alien also eats food and is therefore familiar with the concept of food. Challenge students to think through how they would check for understanding of concepts when talking with the alien.



Tech Connect

Images of the United States. *SchoolTube.*

www.schooltube.com

Using a Flip video camera (or other video device), students can document images, interviews, people, languages, foods, architecture, etc. that they feel illustrate elements of U.S. culture. Divide students into small groups to script their short films and begin capturing videos. Once finished, students can post their films on SchoolTube or a class blog to share with friends and family.

The United States: Myth and Reality. *ePals.*

www.epals.com

Set up ePals accounts for students to participate in electronic email exchanges with students from other countries. Have students develop questions related to perceptions that people who live in other world regions have about the U.S. Use the interviews to create a United States: Myth and Reality webpage that can help students around the world dispel myths and stereotypes about U.S. culture.



Local Links

Resource	Activity
People	Identify people in your community who contribute to the local culture of your town (e.g., artists, shop owners, politicians, musicians, activists). Create a community culture collage using pictures of their work, quotes from interviews and head shots. Interview people from other countries about their perceptions of U.S. Americans.
Businesses and Organizations	Most cities and towns have a Cultural Arts Center. Find out if there is one where you live. Make a visit to see what cultural arts they feature that represent American culture.
Field Trip	Visit a local international business and invite a representative from the business who is from another country to explain perceptions of U.S. Americans abroad and different business practices. Festivals are great places to see local culture in action. Many are based upon local food resources (i.e., Crab Festival, Mushroom Festival, Corn Festival). Learn more about your local culture by making a visit.



Lesson 1

Perspectives on the U.S.

Length	Two class periods of 45 minutes
Materials	Internet access for students, library resources

Learner Outcome

Students will discover the vast diversity of North America.

Essential Question

What is the definition of and who is a U.S. American?

Activating

1. Prior to the lesson, write the following phrases on the board:
 - U.S. Americans are known for_?
 - U.S. Americans come from _?
 - U.S. Americans enjoy eating _?
 - U.S. Americans play _?
2. At the start of the lesson, ask students to divide into four to five groups and answer the questions above. Each group can only have one answer for each question.
3. Instruct the groups to share their answers as you write them on the board.
4. Ask students the following question:
 - Which group has the correct answer? Why?
5. Allow for some discussion.
6. Continue the discussion until the groups realize that there are no “correct” answers.
7. Debrief by having groups discuss why there are many possible answers and then share their thoughts with the class.

Connecting

1. Explain to students that not every U.S. American is the same nor is the United States easily described. Also point out that everyone in the class may not agree because they are all coming from different perspectives, similar to those in other countries.
2. Tell students that they will create slideshows of images that depict the vast diversity across the U. S. Students can search the Internet for images or use magazines to cut out pictures.
3. In groups, have students create slideshows or posters of 10 images that represent diversity in the U.S.
4. Groups can present their slideshows or posters to the whole class.

Summarizing

1. Have student groups discuss their reactions to the origins of the images. Have groups pick images that shocked them the most for representing U.S. American diversity.
2. As a “Ticket Out The Door,” have the students write out why those images shocked them the most.

Assessing

Formative: Activating activity.

Summative: Slideshow or posters; "Ticket Out the Door" assignment.

Extending

1. Ask students to pick one aspect of the United States that they find particularly representative of U.S. American culture and have them research what other world regions contain this aspect as well.
2. Ask students to reflect on the following question: "Is there anything that is truly U.S. American?"



Lesson 2

E Pluribus Unum: "Out of Many, One"

Length 45 minutes

Note: Before you teach this lesson, ask students to discuss with parents/guardians their family heritages.

Materials World maps, [blank world map handouts](#)

Learner Outcome

Students will gain knowledge of the origins of U.S. culture as well as of other cultures that influence U.S. culture.

Essential Question

What is the origin of U.S. culture?

Activating

Write "E Pluribus Unum" on the board. Ask students:

1. Have they ever seen or heard this saying? (Show students the American seal with the eagle, a dollar bill, and a quarter.)
2. In what language it is written? (Latin.)
3. What does it mean? (Out of many, one.)
4. What is the meaning of the saying "Out of Many, One?"
5. Do they think this statement is important to the United States? Why or why not?

Connecting

1. Break students into groups and pass out world maps and [blank world maps](#).
2. Ask students to think about the ancestry of people in the United States. Where did people in the United States come from?
3. Have students brainstorm for three to five minutes to answer the question. Groups will share their answers and record responses on the board. Refer to [an online resource on U.S. ancestry](#) for insight into the question.
4. Have students indicate the countries that make up the ancestries of the United States on their blank world maps as you write them on the board.
5. Instruct students to think about how they would answer the following question:
 - How would you handle being forced to move to a foreign country based on your ancestry? (i.e., if you are part German, you'd move to Germany. If you are Chinese, you'd move to China, etc.) Explain why.
6. After students have had several minutes to think about this question, facilitate a short discussion about it by listing everything that students feel would make assimilating into another country's culture difficult.

7. Ask students to imagine what life would be like if they were forced to move to another country all alone. Have students pair up and talk to partners using the following types of prompts:
 - The three most difficult things about being forced to move to another country would be...
 - The three things that would be most frightening to me would be...
 - The biggest challenges I think I would face in another country would be...

Summarizing

Have students work individually to research countries that are part of their heritages, particularly focusing on cultural aspects of the countries. Inform students that they will have to report their findings in short presentations to their groups.

Assessing

Formative: U.S. ancestry map activity; assimilating activity.

Summative: Heritage activity report.

Extending

1. Ask students to think about the biggest challenges that someone would face coming to the United States for the first time.
2. Ask students to focus on one of the challenges and create a plan that would help new U.S. Americans overcome that challenge.



Lesson 3

Examining Stereotypes

Length	45 minutes
Materials	Chart paper, Internet access for students

Learner Outcome

Students will discover different perceptions of U.S. Americans.

Essential Question

How are U.S. Americans perceived globally?

Activating

Write the following questions on the board:

- U. S. Americans are...
- U. S. Americans are not...
- U. S. Americans like...
- U. S. Americans dislike...

Divide students into four groups. Give each group a piece of chart paper with one of the above questions written at the top. Each group will brainstorm an answer to their question. Then, each group will pass their chart paper to the next group. Once every group has written their answers to each question, share and discuss the answers.

Connecting

1. Explain to students that not everyone in the world would have responded to those four questions in the same way. Point out that everyone in the class may not agree with all of the responses posted during the brainstorming session.
2. Tell students that they are going to investigate some common stereotypes about U.S. Americans. If you have not yet defined stereotypes, take a moment to do so.
3. Divide students into groups of three to four to research U.S. American stereotypes using the Internet and other media.
4. Pass out the pieces of chart paper again. Have students repeat the process of answering the questions but instruct them to base their answers on perceptions of people from other countries of stereotypes of U.S. Americans. Note the names of countries beside their corresponding perceptions on the charts.
5. Post the charts around the room.
6. Allow the student groups to participate in a gallery walk, reading through other groups' statements and discussing among themselves.
7. Next, pair students up to compare and discuss their responses. Allow three to four minutes for discussion.

8. As a whole group, explain that whether or not students thought the statements were all 100% accurate, there are people in other countries that perceive the statements to be true. Ask students why they think people outside the U.S. have such perceptions of U.S. Americans (e.g., behavior of tourists they've seen, Hollywood movies, magazines, reality TV shows).

Summarizing

1. As a "Ticket Out the Door," have students react to the questions below on a half sheet of notebook paper.
 - How would you feel if you met someone from another region of the world who had stereotypes about you before you'd even met him/her? What would you do to address the stereotype(s)?
2. Collect students' responses as they leave class.

Assessing

Formative: Chart questions.

Summative: "Ticket Out the Door" assignment.

Extending

1. Ask students to write in their journals about positive and negative stereotypes that they've heard about people from other world regions.
2. Ask students to reflect on what the sources of those stereotypes might be and how they could affect a person's perception of someone from that region.



References

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Standards Alignment

Common Core State Standards

Grade 6

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.5 Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

Grade 7

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.5 Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify claims and findings and emphasize salient points.

Grade 8

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.5 Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

Grades 6-8

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Grades 9-10

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.7 Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

Grades 11-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

Middle Grades

Theme 1: Culture

Knowledge

Learners will understand:

- "Culture" refers to the socially transmitted behaviors, beliefs, values, traditions institutions, and ways of living together of a group of people.
- How culture influences the ways in which human groups solve the problems of daily living.
- That the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a culture form an integrated system that helps shape the activities and ways of life that define a culture.
- How people from different cultures develop different values and ways of interpreting experience.

Processes

Learners will be able to:

- Ask and find answers to questions related to culture.
- Evaluate how data and experiences may be interpreted differently by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.
- Explain how patterns of behavior reflect cultural values and beliefs.
- Illustrate how holding diverse values and beliefs can contribute or pose obstacles to cross-cultural understanding.

Products

Learners will be able to demonstrate their understanding by:

- Selecting a social group and investigating the commonly held beliefs values behaviors, and traditions that characterize the culture of the group; hypothesizing about how those elements of culture contribute or fail to contribute to meeting the needs of the members of that group; and preparing an oral presentation to present findings.

Higher Grades

Theme 1: Culture

Knowledge

Learners will understand:

- “Culture” refers to the socially transmitted behaviors, beliefs, values, traditions institutions, and ways of living together of a group of people.
- That individuals learn the elements of their culture through interpersonal and collective experience.
- How people from different cultures develop diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.
- That awareness and knowledge of other cultures is important in a connected society and an interdependent world.

Processes

Learners will be able to:

- Ask questions related to culture and find select, organize, and interpret data from research to address research questions.
- Evaluate how data and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.
- Analyze data from various cultural perspectives and evaluate the consequences of interpretations associated with the worldviews of different cultures.
- Interpret patterns of behavior reflecting values and attitudes that contribute or pose obstacles to cross-cultural understanding.

P21 Standards - 21st Century Skills

Global Awareness

- Using 21st century skills to understand and address global issues.
- Learning from and working collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work, and community contexts.
- Understanding other nations and cultures, including the use of non-English languages.

Make Judgments and Decisions

- Effectively analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, claims, and beliefs.
- Analyze and evaluate major alternative points of view.
- Synthesize and make connections between information and arguments.
- Interpret information and draw conclusions based on the best analysis.
- Reflect critically on learning experiences and processes.

International Society for Technology in Education Standards

1. Creativity and Innovation

Students demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes using technology.

2. Communication and Collaboration

Students use digital media and environments to communicate and work collaboratively, including at a distance, to support individual learning and contribute to the learning of others.

3. Research and Information Fluency

Students apply digital tools to gather, evaluate, and use information.

4. Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making

Students use critical thinking skills to plan and conduct research, manage projects, solve problems, and make informed decisions using appropriate digital tools and resources.

Career Technical Education Standards

2. Apply appropriate academic and technical skills.
4. Communicate clearly, effectively, and with reason.
5. Consider the environmental, social, and economic impacts of decisions.
6. Demonstrate creativity and innovation.
7. Employ valid and reliable research strategies.
8. Utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
11. Use technology to enhance productivity.
12. Work productively in teams while using cultural/global competence.

Talking Drawings 1

Directions: In the box above, draw pictures of things that represent culture to you. After partner-sharing, record the differences between your drawing and your partner's drawing in the space provided below.

Talking Drawings II

Directions: In the box above, draw pictures of things that represent culture to you. After partner-sharing, record the differences between your first and second drawings in the space provided below.

Blank World Map





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