

Passing it Down: Comparing and Contrasting Cultural Traditions and Objects

Adapted from The Saratoga Native American Festival 2007 Curriculum Guide by the Ndinakina Education Center

Time: 1 hour for introduction and discussion plus additional class time dependent on length and breadth of research

SC Education Standards:

*Note – This lesson can be adapted to fit most Social Studies Standards by basing lesson discussion on cultural traditions that are currently being studied; Standards listed here are based on SC sources listed on “Suggested Sources” page.

- Social Studies: 2-4.1 - 2-4.4; 3-2.1, 3-2.4, 3-2.5; 4-1.2, 4-2.2; 6-4.1, 6-4.2; 8-1.1, 8-1.4, 8-1.5; WG 1.2, WG 4.1, WG 4.3-4.5; USHC 1.1, USHC 2.4
- English Language Arts:
 - Grade 1:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Reading: Informational Text: 6.1, 7.1
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2
 - Grade 2:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Reading: Informational Text: 5.1, 6.1, 7.1
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1, 2.2, 3.2
 - Grade 3:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Reading: Informational Text: 5.1, 6.1, 7.1
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1 - 2.4, 3.2
 - Grade 4:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Reading: Informational Text: 5.1, 6.1
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1, 3.2
 - Grade 5:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Reading: Informational Text: 5.1, 6.1
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1, 3.2
 - Grade 6:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Reading: Informational Text: 5.1, 7.1
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1, 2.3, 3.2
 - Grade 7:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Reading: Informational Text: 5.1, 6.1
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1-2.3, 3.2
 - Grade 8:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Reading: Informational Text: 5.1, 7.1
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1-2.3, 3.2
 - English 1:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3

- Reading: Informational Text: 5.1, 7.1
- Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1-2.4, 3.2
- English 2:
 - Inquiry Based Literary Standards: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1-4.3, 5.1-5.3
 - Reading: Informational Text: 5.1
 - Communication: 1.1-1.5, 2.1-2.4, 3.2

Materials

For each student/group:

- Access to the internet and classroom research materials
- A copy of the links on the “Suggested Sources” sheet
- Materials to create a small visual presentation (optional)

Introduction

People and cultures have been passing down information and objects for thousands of years. Traditions are beliefs or behaviors that have a special significance or symbolic meaning to group of people and are then taught to the next generation. Traditions can cover a wide range of subjects, including art, dress, holidays/festivals, religion, food, dance, music, and more. Examples of traditions are sweetgrass baskets that are a significant part of Gullah culture, Native American dances, what clothing is worn for a wedding, etc. Traditions do not always remain exactly the same, but can also change through time and be adapted to fit current lifestyles.

Another method of passing down culturally or personally significant information is through objects. These objects are usually handed down through families or cultural/religious leaders. Sometimes the objects have great monetary value, such as the English Crown Jewels, but they can also be made from common materials. No matter the material, these objects have great importance to the person or culture they come from. It can sometimes be difficult for archaeologists to know what significance an artifact has to a person, culture, or tradition if there are no living descendants or historical information to reference.

Activity Steps

1. Introduce or remind students to the concept of tradition. Define a tradition and discuss modern traditions. What objects could be associated with those traditions? What might survive for future archaeologists? Ask if anyone has special traditions from their own family they'd like to share. Any songs, stories, or food that has been passed down from grandparents, aunts, parents, or siblings? What about objects?
2. Now talk about traditions you may have discussed in past chapters of study. Can you think of any objects that would be associated with those traditions? Are they objects that archaeologists might be able to find today?
3. Individually or in groups, have students chose a topic below.
 - a. Language
 - b. Crafts

- c. Foodways
 - d. Stories
 - e. Songs/Music
 - f. Dress
 - g. Dance
 - h. Art
4. Have the student/group research examples of their topic from two different cultures. They may use their own family traditions as one of the two cultures if they choose. In their research they must give an example of the topic in each of the three cultures, compare and contrast the three cultures, and give an example of how the tradition might survive in the archaeological record.
 - a. This portion of the activity can be adjusted for time – for less time, have a limited number of facts the students must discover. For more time, have this be a take-home project to be presented later.
 - b. How the research is presented can also be altered – for less time, simply have the students give an oral report. If time and resources are available, have students have multimedia examples (pictures, audio recordings, video) to accompany their presentation.
 5. Once the research is completed, have each student/group present their findings in front of the class.

What did the students learn about traditions? How were some of these traditions different from our modern traditions? How were they the same? Why is it important to understand cultures tradition? Why and how might a tradition change? If you could create a new tradition, what would it be and why?

Suggested Sources – South Carolina Specific

Elementary/Middle School

Native American - <http://www.studysc.org/elementary/culture-native-american-culture/native-american-culture-elementary>

Native American - <https://www.knowitall.org/collections/native-american-heritage>

Gullah - <https://www.knowitall.org/series/gullah-net>

Edgefield Pottery - <https://www.knowitall.org/video/e-edgefield-pottery-south-carolina-z>

SC Dance - <http://www.studysc.org/elementary/culture-dance/dance-elementary>

SC Food - <http://www.studysc.org/elementary/culture-food-culture/food-culture-elementary>

SC Stories - <http://www.studysc.org/elementary/culture-literature/literature-elementary>

SC Music - <http://www.studysc.org/elementary/culture-music/music-elementary>

Multiple Traditions - <https://www.knowitall.org/subject/traditional-art>

Middle School

Multiple SC Traditions - <http://www.digitaltraditions.net/> -

Sweetgrass Baskets - <http://www.sciway.net/facts/sweetgrass-baskets.html>

Edgefield Pottery - <http://www.sciway.net/south-carolina/edgefield-district-pottery.html>

SC Dance - <http://www.studysc.org/middle-school/culture-dance/dance-middle-school> - Dance

SC Food - <http://www.studysc.org/middle-school/culture-food-culture/food-culture-middle-school>

SC Stories - <http://www.studysc.org/middle-school/culture-literature/literature-middle-school>

Gullah - <http://www.studysc.org/middle-school/culture-gullah-culture/gullah-culture-middle-school> -

SC Music - <http://www.studysc.org/middle-school/culture-music/music-middle-school>

Native American - <http://www.studysc.org/middle-school/culture-native-american-culture/native-american-culture-middle-school>