

## CultureGrams Curriculum Activities for Montgomery Co. MD Public Schools

The use of CultureGrams by students and teachers supports multiple areas of the Maryland Voluntary Curriculum Goals. **Inherent** in this support and **integrated** with each of the activities listed below are the **essential skills** goals for Technology and English Language Arts.

Maryland Voluntary Curriculum Goal: **English Language Arts**--1.1.4 The student will apply reading strategies when comparing, making connections, and drawing conclusions about non-print text--Summarizing, comparing, drawing conclusions about, and synthesizing significant ideas between print and non-print text.

Maryland Voluntary Curriculum Goal: **Technology**--Students will develop abilities to assess the impacts of technology. Objective(s): Refine and extend comprehension skills by selecting, reading, analyzing and evaluating a variety of print and electronic texts about products and systems; Collect information and evaluate its quality. (ITEA, STL 13-J)

### STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORTED MVC CONTENT GOALS

#### **1. U. S. History and Government--The Berlin Wall and the Contrast of Political Systems**

Maryland Voluntary Curriculum Goal: 2.2 The student will compare and evaluate the effectiveness of the United States system of government and various other political systems.

1. Analyze the causes, events and policies of the Cold War between 1946-1968 (5.4.1).

**Background:** On August 13, 1961 the East and West sectors of Berlin were divided by a barbed wire fence (the Berlin Wall), which was soon replaced with a concrete wall. Ask students to read the History section of the *CultureGrams World Edition Germany report* [http://online.culturegrams.com/world/world\\_country.php?contid=5&wmn=Europe&cid=60&cn=Germany](http://online.culturegrams.com/world/world_country.php?contid=5&wmn=Europe&cid=60&cn=Germany). Also, show students the picture entitled "Berlin Wall Crosses" from the *CultureGrams Germany Photo Gallery* <http://online.culturegrams.com/gallery/albumindex.php?id=51&index=1&refername=Europe&referid=4>.

**Activity:** Using these as background, discuss in greater detail how the post-World War II division of Germany led to the creation of an East German socialist state and the construction of the Berlin Wall.

Ask the students to read the remainder of the CultureGrams report, making note of all instances where differences between Germans from the former East and the former West are discussed (e.g. in General Attitudes, tensions between people in the west and east exist; in Family, both parents are more likely to work in the east; in Economy, living standards in the east are lower, etc.) Use this reading to underscore the concept of the *Mauer im Kopf* (the Wall in the Head)—the idea that even though the Berlin Wall no longer exists, divisions remain between people in the west and east. Also introduce the controversial phenomenon known as *Ostalgie*, or nostalgia for the *Ost* (East).

In a brief essay, have students summarize the differences they found between east and west and respond to the following questions:

1. What impact did the division between east and west have on German society, both in the past and now in the present?
2. How would people have felt when the Wall fell and Germany was reunited?
3. Why might people today think fondly of the former East Germany?
4. Why would nostalgia for East Germany be controversial?

## **2. Government—Comparing Governments Around the World with the U. S.**

(Appropriate for Constitution Day on September 17, but on the 18<sup>th</sup> in 2006)

Maryland Voluntary Curriculum Goal: 2.2. The student will compare and evaluate the effectiveness of the United States system of government and various other political systems.

**Background:** Governments take many different forms. Some are democratic, provide for civil liberties, and place an emphasis on individual choice. Other governments are controlled by a small group or single leader. How a country is governed affects everything from economy to religion.

**Activity:** Using the CultureGrams World Edition, ask students to identify different types of governments found across the world. Discuss possible benefits and drawbacks of each type of system. For example: United States, Nigeria, or India—democratic republics; United Kingdom, Sweden, Thailand—constitutional monarchies; Laos, Cuba, or China—one-party totalitarian states; Turkmenistan, Zimbabwe—dictatorships; Swaziland, Saudi Arabia—monarchies. What impact does government type have on other parts of the culture? For example, have students read a report for Vietnam (one-party state), Myanmar (military regime), or Libya (one-party dictatorship) to see how the government influences its people in categories such as General Attitudes, Religion, Economy, Communications, and Education.

## **3. Geography— Comparing States by Creating Tables Mathematics—Statistical Comparisons**

Maryland Voluntary Curriculum Goal: 3.1.1. The student will evaluate demographic factors related to political participation, public policy and government policies.

Maryland Voluntary Curriculum Goal: Mathematics 3.1.1 The student will design and/or conduct an investigation that uses statistical methods to analyze data and communicate results.

**Background:** How does your state stack up against all the others? Is the population better educated than most? Younger? More bilingual? How ethnically diverse is it?

**Activity:** Have your students access the *Create-Your-Own-Tables* feature in the CultureGrams States Edition [http://online.culturegrams.com/secure/states/create-your-own\\_tables.php](http://online.culturegrams.com/secure/states/create-your-own_tables.php).

For the states, have them “Add All.” For the categories, you can also have them “Add All,” or you may designate certain selections for them. Once they click “Create Comparison Table” a sortable table appears in a separate window. Clicking a category heading once ranks the category from lowest to highest; clicking the heading again ranks highest to lowest. Use this feature to have students discover where your state compares to the rest. What results did they expect? Were any surprising?

#### **4. World History—The African Slave Trade**

Maryland Voluntary Curriculum Goal: Grade 8 Social Studies--4. Analyze the institution of slavery and its influence on societies in the United States.

**Background:** Besides being a general atrocity and a personal tragedy for the millions of Africans who were sold as slaves, the African slave trade has had a major effect on the history of the world. Slavery has affected the historical development and current cultural and socio-economic conditions of African nations—from which individuals were captured—and nations in the Americas—to which Africans were brought as slaves.

**Activity:** Using the CultureGrams World Edition, have one half of the class read the indicated sections of the following CultureGrams: United States (History), Antigua and Barbuda (History, Arts, Holidays), Barbados (History, Language, Arts), Haiti (History, Population), St. Lucia (History, Population, Holidays), St. Kitts and Nevis (Flag, History), and St. Vincent (History, Holidays). Have the other half read Angola (History), Botswana (Religion), Malawi (History), Mozambique (History), Senegal (History), and Sierra Leone (History, Population, Religion).

1. Have the group who read the African CultureGrams discuss the circumstances surrounding the African side of the slave trade, in addition to any long-lasting effects it has had on populations or religions.
2. Have the group who read the Americas CultureGrams discuss the history and cultural impact of slavery in those countries. What did it take to end slavery? What types of economies were created as a result of the slave trade? How did it influence the arts and languages of the Americas?

Have the two groups share their findings with each other through mini-presentations.

As a class, analyze the Country and Development Data for all of the countries. Which statistics might slavery have influenced and how?

Further research could include outside study on where and how slavery still exists.

#### **5. Health & Fitness—Disease Prevention and Control**

Maryland Voluntary Curriculum Goal: 7.0 Disease Prevention and Control - Students will demonstrate the ability to apply prevention and treatment knowledge, skills, and strategies to reduce susceptibility and manage disease.

**Background:** Health and fitness can be affected by a variety of forces, including environment, diet, living conditions, literacy, and access to health care. Teach the students the difference between communicable and non-communicable diseases and discuss which of the above forces might contribute to each.

**Activity:** Using the CultureGrams World Edition, assign students to read the following sections in a variety of reports: Land and Climate, Diet, Recreation, Education, and Health. Choose an example or two of communicable and non-communicable diseases (i.e. heart disease, cancer, obesity and AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis) and discuss them in light of the country sections you assigned. What cultural forces contribute to the development of both communicable and non-communicable diseases in these countries? How could they be prevented and what holds people back from implementing these changes?

As a class, decide on one way students might be able to help fight disease in another country. Ideas might include donating money as a class to a health-related charity, collecting scarce medical supplies and sending them to a hospital in the class's country of choice, etc.

## **6. Social Studies: Economics—Statistical Comparison of Countries Demographics Mathematics—Statistical Comparisons**

Maryland Voluntary Curriculum Goal: Economics 4.1.1 The student will evaluate how governments affect the answers to the basic economic questions of what to produce, how to produce, and for whom to produce.

Maryland Voluntary Curriculum Goal: Mathematics 3.1.1 The student will design and/or conduct an investigation that uses statistical methods to analyze data and communicate results.

**Background:** Sierra Leone's real GDP per capita is \$470, while Luxembourg's is \$53,780. Ten per 1,000 infants die yearly in American Samoa compared to 77 in Pakistan. Statistics, though they don't tell the whole story about a country, offer helpful tools for tracking demographic and economic trends while comparing countries and regions.

**Activity:** Choose a pair of statistics such as population and Real GDP per capita or literacy and life expectancy. Using the CultureGrams World Edition, look up these statistics for five countries in some of the world's major regions (Europe, Africa, North America, Caribbean, South America, Asia, Oceania, etc.).

1. Create averages from the statistics found in the five CultureGrams for each region.
2. Have students draw three histograms. The first should be a comparison of, for example, regional literacy averages; the second, regional life expectancy rates; and the third, a combination of both statistical averages.
3. Compare and contrast the first two histograms. Do they share a similar pattern?
4. Discuss the third histogram. Does there seem to be any correlation between the two statistics you analyzed? If so, what might be the cause of such a relationship? Might it be mostly coincidental, and if so, what other factors might affect the statistics you chose?

For a more in-depth comparison, students could create a scatterplot, identify and eliminate countries that are extreme outliers, and recalculate the regional averages.

## **7. Environmental Science—Greenhouse Effect and Air Pollution**

Maryland Voluntary Curriculum Goal: 6.3.1 The student will evaluate the interrelationship between humans and air quality.

**Background:** In the past, the United States has decided not to ratify environmental treaties such as the Kyoto Protocol, though other countries with high greenhouse emissions, such as Brazil, China, and India, are signatories. As one of the largest and most industrialized nations in the world, the U.S., through the pollution its companies emit, has a wide-reaching effect on the global environment. Similarly, because of its wealth and economic influence, the United States can significantly hamper or help world-wide environmental clean-up plans.

**Activity:** Refer to the Extremes section of the Data Tables in the CultureGrams Online World Edition. Note that the United States is one of the top (if not the top) polluters in every

section listed. Have your students talk about why the United States pollutes so much (you might look at major industries, the size of its economy and population, etc.). Compare the levels of pollution to countries with similar economies and/or population sizes.

Talk about whether the students think the United States actions are fair to the rest of the world. Discuss options of how the United States might be able to reduce pollution (answers might include recycling, lower factory and car emissions, alternative sources of fuel, etc.) Who might oppose these changes and why?

Compare the benefits and costs of the United States signing an international treaty such as the Kyoto Protocol. Read the General Attitudes section of the U.S. CultureGram. Which characteristics might cause U.S. Americans to resist such international treaties?