

New York City Schools and CultureGrams Standards-Based Curriculum Activities

1. Civics-Government—Comparing Governments around the World with the U.S.

(Especially appropriate for the annual *Constitution Day* in September)

New York Standard for Civics, Citizenship, and Government: Standard 5.1--compare various political systems with that of the United States in terms of ideology, structure, function, institutions, decision-making processes, citizenship roles, and political culture; and identify and analyze advantages and disadvantages of various governmental systems.

New York Standard for English Language Arts: Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts.

CultureGrams 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.

2. Geography—Comparing States Using a Variety of Factors **Mathematics—Statistical Analysis**

New York Standard for Geography: 1. Identify and compare the physical, human, and cultural characteristics of different regions and people.

New York Standard for Mathematics: Representation Strand-- Students will select, apply, and translate among mathematical representations to solve problems (Use physical objects, drawings, charts, tables, graphs, symbols, equations, or objects created using technology as representations).

New York Standard for English Language Arts: Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts.

CultureGrams 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. 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?

3. World History—The Berlin Wall and the Contrast of Political Systems

New York Standard for World History: Standard 4: analyze different interpretations of important events, issues, or developments in world history by studying the social, political, and economic context in which they were developed.

New York Standard for English Language Arts: Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts.

CultureGrams 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. 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?

4. Health Education—Disease Prevention and Control

New York Standard for Health Education: Standard 3.1--Students will understand the influence of culture, media, and technology in making decisions about personal and community health issues. They will know about and use valid health information, products, and services. Students will advocate for healthy families and communities.

New York Standard for English Language Arts: Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts.

CultureGrams 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.

5. Economics—Statistical Comparison of Countries' Demographics Mathematics—Data Analysis

New York Standard for Economics: Standard 2--Use economic information to identify similarities and Differences to determine trends; infer relationships between various elements of an economy; organize and present information in charts, tables, and graphs; extrapolate and make conclusions about economic questions, issues, and problems.

New York Standard for Mathematics: Representation Strand-- Students will select, apply, and translate among mathematical representations to solve problems (Use physical objects, drawings, charts, tables, graphs, symbols, equations, or objects created using technology as representations).

New York Standard for English Language Arts: Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts.

CultureGrams 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.

6. Economics—Hispanics, NAFTA, and American Immigrant Labor **U.S. History—National Hispanic Heritage Month**

New York Standard for Economics: Standard 1-- explain how economic decision making has become global as a result of an interdependent world economy.

New York Standard for U.S. and New York History: Standard 2-- analyze the role played by the United States in international politics, past and present.

New York Standard for English Language Arts: Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts.

CultureGrams Background: Each year we celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month in September, when the culture and contributions of Hispanic Americans are recognized. This day marks the independence day of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. Mexico's Independence Day is the next day, on September 16. Help students gain a better understanding of issues facing Mexico and the U.S. Hispanic community.

Activity: Begin by student study of the picture entitled "Hotels in Cancún" in the Mexico photo gallery at <http://online.culturegrams.com/gallery/index.php?id=23&refername=The%20Americas&referid=3>] from the CultureGrams Online World Edition [<http://online.culturegrams.com/world/index.php>]. Read the caption out loud and discuss the ways in which the United States takes advantage of and benefits from the cheap labor that Mexico provides. Next, in order to give students an image of what life is like for many Mexicans, display the following pictures: "Boys Fishing," "Children Eating Tortillas," "Making Masa,"

"Making Tamales," "Schoolchildren," and "Rustic Stove." Discuss why Mexican people, like those from the pictures, might be attracted to work in U.S. factories on the Mexican border, even though they get paid much less than their U.S. American counterparts would for doing the same work.

Introduce NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) by reading the Economy section of the Mexico CultureGrams report as a class. Provide more details as you think necessary, outlining both the pros (increased jobs with higher-than-average wages for Mexicans, increased profits for U.S. companies, etc.) and the cons (U.S. jobs exported to Mexico, unsafe or unregulated working conditions in maquiladoras [manufacturing plants], underpaid Mexican workers, etc.).

Move the desks into a fishbowl formation (one small circle in the center of the room surrounded by a much larger one outside it.) Ask for three or four volunteers to sit in the center. The rules for the fishbowl are that only the students in the center may speak; those on the outside circle must tap the shoulder of a student on the inside circle to trade places; and everyone must participate. To motivate students to join in, place a candy bowl in the center of the inner circle or award points for participation. Students in the center begin their discussion by drawing from a bowl of questions you have already prepared on the economic, cultural, and ethical ramifications of the use of cheap Mexican labor in relation to NAFTA and immigration (illegal or otherwise). When the discussion dies down, students pick another question from the bowl and continue.

7. Science--Environmental—Greenhouse Effect and Air Pollution **Mathematics—Data Analysis**

New York Standard for Science—The Living Environment: Standard 7--Human decisions and activities have had a profound impact on the physical and living environment.

New York Standard for Mathematics: Representation Strand-- Students will select, apply, and translate among mathematical representations to solve problems (Use physical objects, drawings, charts, tables, graphs, symbols, equations, or objects created using technology as representations).

New York Standard for English Language Arts: Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts.

CultureGrams 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?

8. World History—The Slave Trade **U.S. and New York History**

New York Standard for World History: Standard 4--Analyze different interpretations of important events, issues, or developments in world history by studying the social, political, and economic context in which they were developed.

New York Standard for U.S. and New York History: Standard 1.4--Understands how different experiences, beliefs, values, traditions, and motives cause individuals and groups to interpret historic events and issues from different perspectives.

New York Standard for English Language Arts: Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding. As listeners and readers, students will collect data, facts, and ideas; discover relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and use knowledge generated from oral, written, and electronically produced texts.

CultureGrams 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?
3. Have the two groups share their findings with each other through mini-presentations.
4. 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.

Additional CultureGrams activities can be found by browsing the archive of [Teachable Moments](#), a monthly collection of activities for most ProQuest Library teaching and learning solutions. Teachers and librarians can subscribe by visiting the ProQuest Educators Website: <http://www.proquestk12.com/news.shtml>