

Students Helping Students

Lesson Plans

Nepal Lesson #3: Diversity Under the “Roof of the World”

Overview

Students learn that Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi-religious country. Student teams study people from some of the groups that make up the cultural mosaic of Nepal. Students create storyboards depicting a day in the life of a Nepali, and use these to teach each other about their new understanding of Nepal. Information presented in these lessons will likely take two, perhaps three class periods. Break at the teacher’s discretion.

Subjects: Social Studies

Grades: 5-9

Time Needed: Two 50-minute class periods

Materials: Computer connected to the Internet, projector and screen for showing online digital video from the web.

Learning Goals

- Students will learn about the many cultures and religions of Nepal.
- Students will learn about Nepal’s diverse landscape.
- Students will understand the differences and similarities of life for a Nepali and life for an American student.
- Students will relate the themes of location, place, movement, region, and relationship to the geography and culture of Nepal.

Key Concepts and Vocabulary

- Culture, Diversity
- *Namaste*, Greetings
- Caste system
- Regions to review: India, Tibet, Asia
- Hinduism, Buddhism
- Tradition

Additional Resources and Learning Connections

- For general data about Nepal, please visit the *Wikipedia Demographics of Nepal* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Nepal
- To learn more about the major ethnic and social groups of Nepal and their defining characteristics, please see resources below:
 - *Nepal.com* <http://www.Nepal.com>
 - *Visit Nepal* http://www.visitnepal.com/nepal_information/people.php
- To learn how these groups are distributed geographically, visit Asia Media Net http://www.southasianmedia.net/profile/nepal/nepal_people.cfm
- For more information on the documentary featured below, *In the Shadow of the Himalayas: How People Live in Nepal*, or to order a full length copy, please visit www.smudgeproductionsllc.com. This documentary was produced by Smudge Productions, LLC, with all proceeds benefiting Room to Read.

Instructional Procedures

1. Watch the video clip from *In the Shadow of the Himalayas: How People Live in Nepal – Namaste*. Ask students if they can think of any other greetings like *namaste*, where it is used both for hello and goodbye (examples: “aloha” from Hawaii and “ciao” in Italian). A curricular extension might include a broader discussion of the range of “greetings and farewells” in different cultures.
2. Introduce Nepali people and ancestry by sharing with students that the Nepalese are descendants of people from three major regions: India, Tibet, and Central Asia. Use a map to show the possible lined of travel, and where the surrounding countries are located.
3. Watch the video clip from *In the Shadow of the Himalayas: How People Live in Nepal – Nepali people and ancestry*. Ask students to observe closely and take notes on some of the different ethnic groups described. Be ready to discuss: “How might the country or region where they came from influence Nepali people’s way of life?”
4. After viewing the video clip, ask students to help you list the seven or eight most prominent cultural groups named in the film clip. Remind students that Nepal is home to 40 to 103 cultural groups, depending on how the groups are defined.
5. Put students into groups of two or three. Ask student groups to discuss the following: *Nepal is about the size of Tennessee but is much more diverse, imagine around 100 different cultural groups in one state! What do you think might explain such great cultural diversity in this small country?* Remind students that the physical place often influences culture. Nepal’s mountainous terrain isolates it from easy access, makes communication between remote groups more difficult, etc..

6. Have student groups report on their ideas and discuss as a class. Build on students' ideas, ensuring that they see the strong connection between place, natural resources, and cultural development. (Helping students meet key Social Studies national standards)
7. Show where different Nepali groups live, using this "Terrain and Peoples" map from VisitNepal.com: http://www.visitnepal.com/nepal_information/people.php
8. A caste system also defines the type of work and style of life for people in Nepal. Introduce the concept of a caste system, and explain where else in the world this formalized system is at work to define the work people do and how they live. (For more on caste systems see: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caste>)
9. Next, students will watch another video slip about religions in Nepal. Prior to viewing, check for understanding. Ask the students:
 - *Where did Nepali people originate?* (India, Tibet, and Central Asia).
 - *What religious beliefs might their ancestors have held?*
 - *What are the likely religions of Nepal today?* (Some students may know about Hinduism in India and Buddhism in Tibet and Central Asia, which are the prevailing religions of Nepal). Religious beliefs help define different cultural identities in Nepal. Religion is integral to Nepali life.
10. Introduce religion in Nepal with the clip from *In the Shadow of the Himalayas: How People Live in Nepal – Religion*. As students watch the video, ask them to think about the role of religion in people's lives. Note the holy sites, imagery, festivals, and devotional activities. The idea is not to memorize the facts but to gain a general awareness of the country's cultural elements, and compare and contrast with what is familiar to the students – their own cultural backgrounds and practices.
11. After viewing the video clip, discuss some of the religious practices shown in the video. Contrast with practices in religions in the United States and elsewhere. Tell students they will have more opportunities to learn about Nepal's people, culture, and religion through an upcoming project.
12. In order to learn more about the diverse people of Nepal, put students into teams of two or three. Ask each team to select one group from the major cultural groups of Nepal on which to focus, letting them know this is the group they will research. Their product will be a montage of pictures and words they can use to teach others about one group in Nepal. Students should use library sources and the web research links listed above in Resources and Connections.

13. Prior to researching, ask: *What characteristics define a group?* List these and more to guide research efforts:
 - a. Place of origin and ethnicity
 - b. Location
 - c. Work and school
 - d. Religion
 - e. Traditions/customs
 - f. Everyday life: homes, animals/pets, dress, means of travel, food, family
14. Discuss creative ways to approach the montage. Prompts such as "*When I wake up and look out my window I see...*" might result in an interesting representation of the locale.
15. When montages are complete, have each team present theirs to the class, using it to describe the group they researched, and what makes it interesting. Use the list above as a guide.
16. Finally, discuss the distinctions and commonalities among the groups that make up the Nepali people. End the lesson with *namaste!*

Suggested Evaluation

- Have students write a short essay from this prompt:

Reflect on what you've learned about life in Nepal, and describe the three most significant ways your life is similar and the three most significant ways your life is different. Supply supporting details and convince the reader that these similarities and differences are significant and not trivial.

Curricular Extensions

- Food: Make a typical Nepali meal, such as Dahl Baht (Rice and Lentil)
<http://www.roomtoread.org/shs/nepal/food.html>
- Other Nepali Recipes can be found here:
<http://www.nepalhomepage.com/society/recipes/recipes.html>
- Start an ePals Exchange: <http://www.epals.com/>
(There are a few Nepali schools currently listed, though these may not be typical of most Nepali schools.)
- Listen to today's news in Nepali and English on Nepal Radio, found here:
<http://www.radionepal.org/>

- For high school students, consider reading from nine short stories in:

Arresting God in Kathmandu by [Samrat Upadhyay](#)

Brief Description: The first Nepali author writing in English to be published in the West, Upadhyay brings to readers the flavor of Nepal and its culture in this impressive collection of nine short stories. Many of the pieces contain themes centered around the cultural taboos relating to the roles of men and women, love, and fidelity and discuss other issues pertinent to Nepali life such as arranged marriages, the caste system, and the Hindu faith.

- Review the other lessons included on this website, and suggest the class start a project to support Room to Read's efforts in Nepal!

Namaste!

These teacher resources were developed by the [Learning Innovation and Technology Consortium \(LITC\)](#). LITC develops educational programs and materials in support of problem solving, innovation, and social entrepreneurship.