

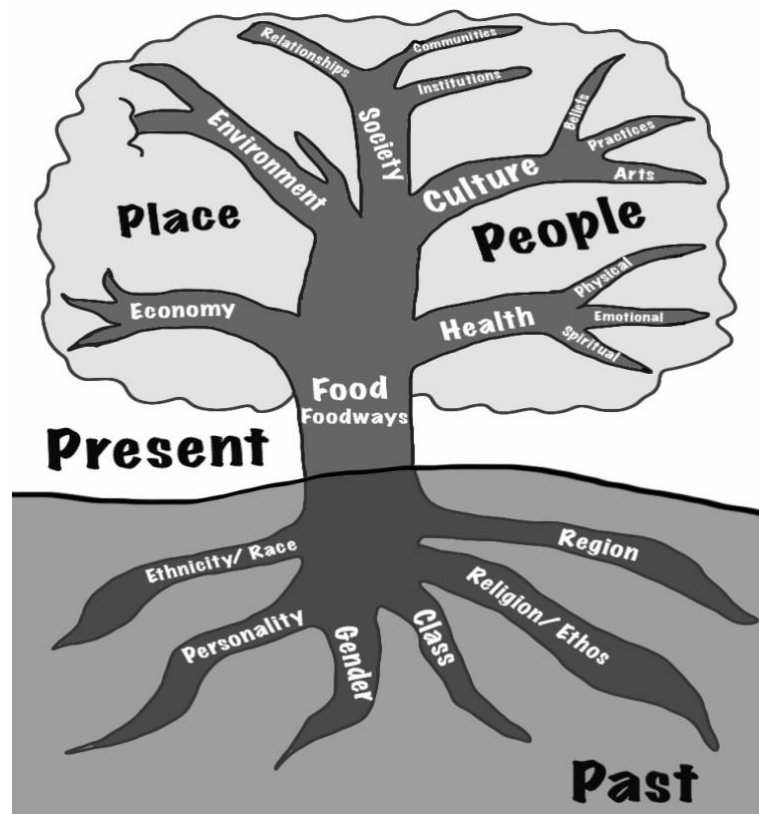
Keywords:
Exploring Cultural Differences Through the Lens of Food
K-12 Curriculum Guide

Center for Food And Culture
Lucy M. Long, Susan Eleuterio, and Jerry L. Reed, III
(Partially funded by the American Folklore Society)
May 2020 (updated March 24, 2023)

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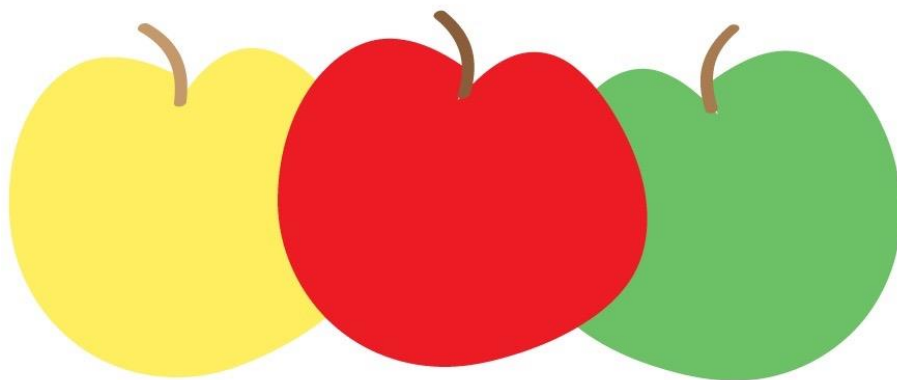
Introduction

Cultural differences are a resource adding richness to our lives, but they can also cause conflict when people do things differently from what we're used to or that are different from what we like or value. We might feel suspicious of people who look different from us, speak in languages we don't understand, or eat food we find distasteful.

We need to talk about such differences in order to understand them—and resolve them—but that is frequently difficult to do. Sometimes the terms and phrases being used can be confusing. We think we know what they mean; but other people might use them differently. Also, we might be hesitant to express our feelings openly or are sensitive to others' feelings and unsure how to address concerns,

This project uses food to explain and illustrate some **Keywords** frequently used in discussing conflicts and inequalities around race, ethnicity, class, gender, and other characteristics involved in cultural differences. Those key words reflect a history of use and are loaded with meanings that easily get lost when they are tossed around. Understanding those keywords is a beginning in talking about and understanding cultural differences.

Why use food? Eating is universal, but **Food** is particular to each culture. Every group has their own ideas of what tastes good, what foods are healthy, how they should be prepared and served, and what meanings are attached to different dishes. At the same time, we all eat, so we can relate to each other's needs. Food offers a lens for exploring cultural differences, how those differences came about, and why they matter. It also helps us understand some basic concepts and terms. We can then apply those understandings to finding ways to resolve conflicts, find empathy for one another, and collaborate in creating a kinder and more equitable world.



To the Teacher:

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects have been identified by both educators and employers as necessary in order to increase national and individual competitiveness in the global marketplace. The skills and knowledge taught through these subjects are integral to functioning successfully within today's modern society. The Center for Food and Culture feels that education in the Humanities is also necessary and should be integrated with STEM subjects. The Humanities are those disciplines that study the ways in which humankind has sought and defined the meaning and purpose of life. STEM addresses *how*, the Humanities address *why*.

Food is an ideal subject for studying both STEM and the Humanities. The lessons offered here use approaches based in folklore scholarship based on ethnography—observing and talking to people about what food means to them. They provide opportunities for teachers and students to examine a component of everyday life—eating--to demonstrate mastery of English Language along with other concepts and ideas from History, Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects.

The Keywords Curriculum takes a humanities approach to addressing issues around cultural differences. It can be used alongside other subjects or as a distinct set of assignments in or out of the classroom. It addresses the ideas underlying cultural differences, so it should be used in conjunction with materials that provide more content on specific aspects of culture--race, ethnicity, class, gender, socioeconomic class, abilities, age, even personality and personal preferences around sports or music. This means that the ideas can be adapted to specific classrooms and communities. It also means that teachers may need to go to other resources to gain a better grasp of the concepts themselves. They should also need to dig into local cultural resources to find information relevant to their specific circumstances.

This curriculum includes 5 stand-alone units that can be modified for different grade levels, abilities, circumstances, and subjects. Each unit includes an introduction, a description of activities, connections to cultural differences, and handouts for students. It also includes a list of resources for educators, assessment tools, and relevant curriculum standards. An Appendix includes a bibliography along with lists of terms and additional materials for understanding food from a humanities and folkloristic perspective.

Unit I. Culture

To begin, we need to clarify what we mean by culture. The word can refer to several different ideas—a group of people; their way of life and beliefs, their traditions, their artistic expressions, and their “lens” for interpreting reality. Can we identify which definition is being used when we see differences?

Food culture can have all the meanings the word “culture” carries, but it most commonly refers to a group of people who share a way of eating. It includes the practices, attitudes, and beliefs as well as the networks and institutions surrounding the production, distribution, and consumption of food.

Activity 1: Student Culture Chart—helps students see the range of activities, events, and institutions involved in their own culture.

Activity 2: Students' Food Culture--Introduces students to describing distinctive features of their own food culture.

Unit II. Construction

Race is frequently said to be a “social construct,” but what does that mean when skin color and other physical characteristics seem to be objective and visible. Such categories seem to be a natural reflection of the world, but they are not simply ways to describe people. They exist because they are useful to us in some way. The category of race, unfortunately, has been a way to justify mistreatment and exploitation of large groups of people.

Food similarly seems to be objective and self-evident, yet definitions of what can be food differ across cultures. That’s because it is culturally, socially, and personally constructed as “matter considered appropriate for ingestion.” That construction is fluid and dynamic, shaped by history, culture, and personal experiences.

Activity: Food Preferences—introduces students to the idea of construction and how they developed their own perceptions of what is food and which foods are tasty.

Unit III. Identity

The word “identity” in contexts of cultural differences frequently refers to individuals as members of a racial or ethnic group. What is the relationship, though, between who we are and our skin color or family background? How can we be individuals and also members of groups? Why does it matter so much how other people see us?

A folklore approach to identity sees all of us as having multiple identities made up of our race, ethnicity, nationality, region, class, gender, age, ableness, religion, beliefs and values, occupations, personal interests, personality and our various social roles. We highlight different aspects of our identity in different situations, but some contexts do not let us choose which aspect we want to emphasize. Food choices express our identity whether we intend to or not.

Activity 1: Food Identity Collage Poster—Students describe their own identities and match those with the food they eat.

Activity 2: Reading Identity Through Food (Sandwiches)--Students describe their favorite sandwich, then explore how those ingredients reflect or express their identity.

Unit IV. Meaning

What do cultural differences mean? What does it mean to recognize them? What do we mean by “meaning”? How do we communicate with each other so that each participant understands the other? What is “understanding?” We frequently communicate meaning through symbols, rituals, and art. Symbols are objects and actions that stand for something else. Rituals are recurring symbolic activities or events, often recognizing and celebrating significant milestones in life or the seasons. Art frequently expresses our emotions and imagination. All three are used to tell other people what things mean.

Food is oftentimes used as a symbol. It also frequently plays a significant role in rituals and can also be used to express creativity and imagination.

Activity 1: Symbol: apples—Introduces the concept of symbol by exploring the variety of things an apple can stand for in American culture.

Activity 2: Ritual: holidays, birthdays, school traditions—Introduces the definition of ritual and the different types of rituals by having students describe a common food symbol for birthdays—the birthday cake.

Activity 3: Art: design in fruit displays, drawing fruit—Explores the idea of expressing creativity and imagination through arranging displays of fruit and by drawing fruit.

Unit V. Systems/Structures

Discussions of cultural differences frequently refer to systems and structures, as in “systemic racism” or “structural inequality.” What do those phrases mean? This unit explores those ideas through the idea of foodways, the network of processes, contexts, and conceptualizations around food and eating. Foodways illustrates how in a system all the parts are connected, so that if one part is changed, the others are affected. That helps to explain why change can be so difficult. Also, various external and internal forces (structures) keep the system going. Food system refers to the specific system connecting the production of food to consumption.

Activity 1: The Foodways of a Meal--Introduces students to the idea of systems and structures by having them describe the foodways of one of their meals. This illustrates how all the parts work together as a system to create that meal and how various external and internal forces (such as parents, friends, school lunch) affect their choices about that meal.

Activity 2: Food system--Follow a product from farm to table (tomato, milk, apple).

RESOURCES

See Appendix for an extensive list of resources. This includes websites, articles published in academic journals, and published books.

Each unit also includes a list of selected resources.

To get started, it is recommended to go to several resources that give more context:

“Talking About Race” <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race>. National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution.

Markus, Hazel Rose and Paula M. L. Moya, eds. *Doing Race: 21 Essays for the 21st Century*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010.

McIntosh, Peggy. 1989. “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” *Peace and Freedom Magazine*, July/August, 1989, pp. 10-12.

<https://nationalseedproject.org/Key-SEED-Texts/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack>.

Olua, Ijeoma. 2018. *So You Want to Talk About Race*. New York: Seal Press.

Takaki, Ronald. 2009 (1993). *A Different Mirror: A history of Multicultural America*.

Wilkerson, Isabel. 2020. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. Random House



Keywords

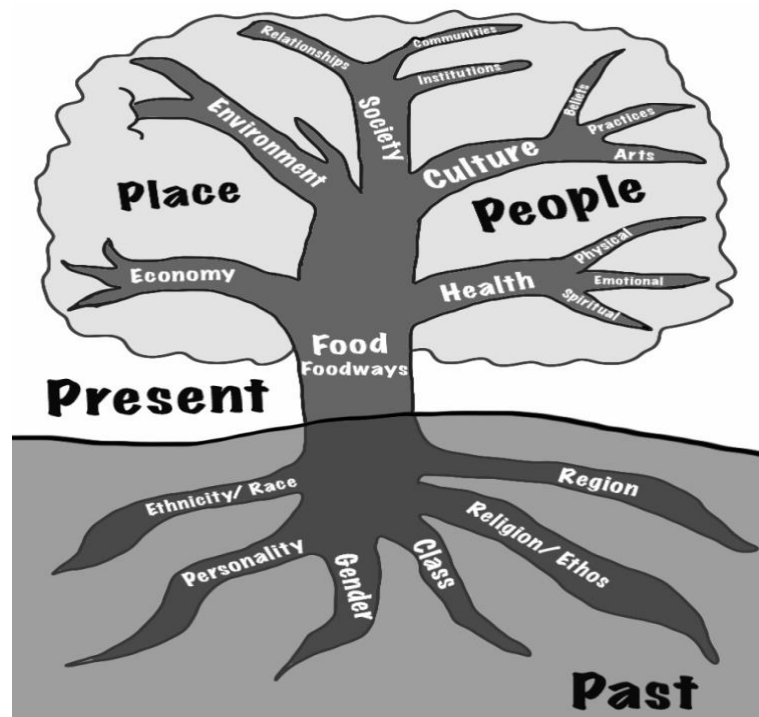
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UNIT 1: CULTURE

What is Culture?

Topic: Concepts of Culture/Food culture

Activity 1: Student culture chart

Activity 2: Students' Food Culture

The word “culture” is frequently used when we talk about different groups of people and the differences between them. We also tend to say that someone acts a certain way because of their culture or they learned it from their culture. Even the title of this curriculum uses the word. What exactly does it mean, though? What is culture?

This unit gives several answers to that question and introduces the idea that culture is a lens for interpreting experiences. It then illustrates these ideas with food examples. The activities ask students to describe their own cultures and the foodways of their favorite meal. The connections to cultural differences section emphasizes that cultures have a logic to their ways of doing things and seeing the world. It also emphasizes that culture shapes how people behave and think, but individuals also can also act and think on their own.

The word “culture” is oftentimes used in a number of ways:

- 1) **“Culture”** (with a capital “C”) refers to selected artistic forms representing a group of people, usually those who have political, social, or economic power. Culture here is equated with civilized and educated, so that people say they are going to go to the art museum to get some “Culture.” They also refer to people knowledgeable about those selected arts as being “Cultured.”
- 2) **“cultures”** or “a culture” (small “c”) refer to groups of people, usually sharing a language, heritage, religion, or nationality. Smaller groups within large ones are called “subcultures.”
- 3) **“culture”** can refer to a group’s a way of life or everyday practices.
“Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts...” (Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952: 181)
- 4) **“culture”** can refer to a tangible and intangible collective that exists in time and space that is learned by individuals who belong to it.
“Culture... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society” (Tylor 1871).
- 5) **culture as a “lens”** for interpreting our experiences. From this perspective, culture gives individuals the categories by which they classify the world and understand and evaluate what they experience. “Culture is the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior” (Spradley 1980, 6).

It is helpful to identify which meaning of “culture” is being used in discussing cultural differences. Frequently, it refers to different customs or ways of doing things, particularly

when those ways seem unusual or even wrong. Such differences raise suspicions about the intelligence, morality, and even humanity of another person.

Looking at cultures as different sets of “complex wholes” helps us understand how different customs develop and how they make sense to people in that culture.

Looking at culture as a lens helps us to understand why people think the way they do and might respond to events very differently from how we respond.

Several other points about culture as “complex whole” and as a lens:

1. Culture is **learned**. Individuals are taught both informally and formally how to think and act in a particular culture.
2. Culture is **dynamic and fluid**. Individuals within a culture can change customs and interpretations. New situations require adaptations.
3. Cultures are made up of **individuals**. They can accept some of the collective practices and thinking but also have their interpretations and ways of doing things. They have “agency” to choose meanings if not actions.

CULTURE and FOOD

This curriculum explores the connections between food and culture, and each unit focuses on different ways of looking at those connections. It focuses on the concept of “food culture,” but it mentions other relevant terms. The unit on systems features the concept of foodways.

Food culture has all the various meanings that the word “culture” carries. We use it here to refer to the ways of eating found among the many different groupings of people found throughout the world. It includes the practices, attitudes, and beliefs as well as the networks and institutions surrounding the production, distribution, and consumption of food. It encompasses the concepts of foodways, cuisine, and food system and includes the fundamental understandings a group has about food, historical and current conditions shaping that group’s relationship to food, and the ways in which the group uses food to express identity, community, values, status, power, artistry and creativity. It also includes a groups’ definitions of what items can be food, what is tasty, healthy, and socially appropriate for specific subgroups or individuals and when, how, why, and with whom those items can or should be consumed.

Cuisine usually refers to a set of ingredients, flavor combinations, recipes, and cooking styles felt to represent the best of a food culture. It is oftentimes associated with formal training in the culinary arts, official definitions of that culture’s food, and the groups within a culture holding economic and social power. It is also associated with gourmet cooking and eating.

Food system refers to the ways in which food moves from production to consumption. In between can include how food is processed, packaged, marketed, and distributed, as well as disposed. Economic systems are a significant part of food systems as are transportation networks, agricultural industries, and food retailers and restaurants.

Foodways refers to the total network of practices and concepts surrounding food and eating. Change in one area affects others, and memories and meanings get attached to food through the various activities and contexts of foodways. It includes food as product

(ingredient, recipe, dish, meal, meal system), the processes attached to food (production, procurement, preservation, preparation, presentation, consumption, cleanup and disposal), and performance (contexts for food, concepts about food, identity and meaning of food).

ASSIGNMENTS:

Activity 1: Student culture chart—helps students see the range of activities, events, and institutions involved in their own culture.

Activity 2: Students' Food Culture--Introduces students to describing distinctive features of a food culture. Students can draw or write in answers. Compare in class.

- Flavor Profile: Spices and Flavorings
- Core Foods: Proteins, Vegetables, Fruits
- Common eating styles and utensils
- Meal System: (Names of meals/times/usual types of foods)

Connections to cultural difference:

- Knowing that culture is learned, dynamic, and fluid helps us understand how different groups of people have developed their ways of living in the ways they have. Each culture has an internal logic so that the different practices make sense within that culture.
- Knowing that culture is a lens for interpretation helps us understand why different groups of people respond to events differently and evaluate them differently.
- Knowing that individuals are shaped by their cultures but also have “agency” in choosing practices and interpretations helps us approach people on an individual level rather than as representatives of cultural stereotypes.

RESOURCES:

Belasco, Warren. 2008. *Food: The key concepts*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic

Bowman, Paddy, Amanda Dargan, and Steve Zeitlin. 2016. You Eat What You Are: Foodways in Education. *C.A.R.T.S. Cultural Arts Resources for Teachers and Students* (Special Focus: Teaching with Foodways). 11: 1, 3.

Eleuterio, Susan. “Foodways Lesson.” Show Me Traditions: An Educator’s Guide To Teaching Folk Arts and Folklife in Missouri Schools. “ Missouri Folk Arts Program. 2009

Hamer, Lynne. 1999. Eating in School: Food and Multicultural Education. *Digest: An Interdisciplinary Study of Food and Foodways*. 19: 2-7.

Long, Lucy M.,” Lexicon of Food.” <http://lexiconofsustainability.com/lexicon-of-food/>
Long, Lucy M., ed. *The Food and Folklore Reader*. Bloomsbury, 2015.

Spencer-Oatey, Helen. What is culture? A compilation of quotations. *GlobalPAD Core Concepts*, 2012. (<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/globalpadintercultural>



UNIT I. CULTURE
Activity 1: Drawing My Culture

How I get to school:	What I like to eat:	My family:
Music that I like:	How my family celebrates:	What I like to do:
What language I speak:	Where I am from:	Jobs my family have:



UNIT I. CULTURE
Activity 2: Describe Your Food Culture

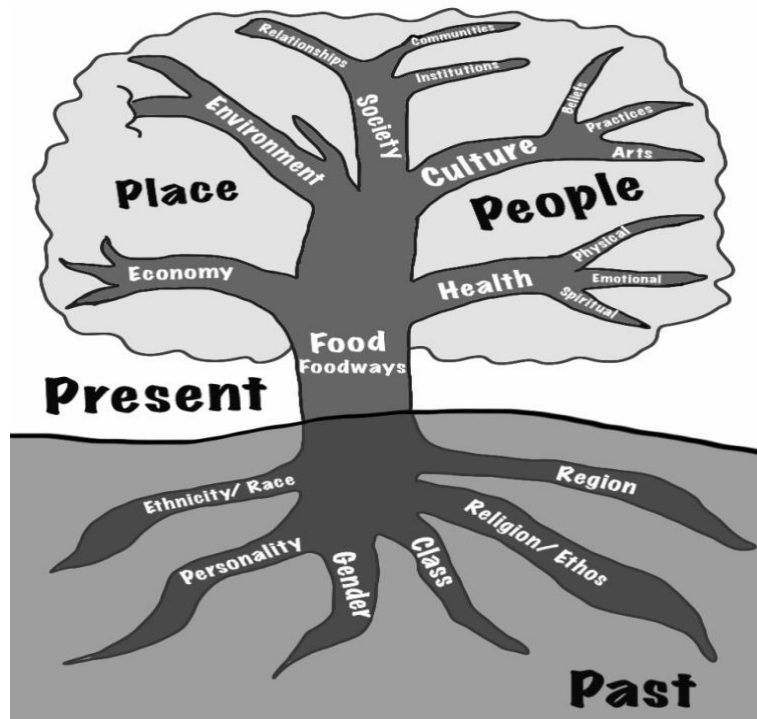
Name of Culture

Core Foods (Proteins, Vegetables, Fruits)
Flavor Profile (spices and flavorings)
Meal System: (Names of meals/times/usual types of foods)
Common eating styles and utensils (Hands? Fork? Spoon? Chopsticks? Manners while eating?)

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Unit II. CONSTRUCTION

Food as a Cultural, Social and Personal Construction

Topic: Food Preferences

Race is oftentimes described as a “social construct.” Students (and many adults) find that difficult to understand since they can see skin color and therefore assume that racial categories are visually objective categories. Food similarly seems to be an objective and self-evident category. Most people will say that the answer to “what is food?” is obvious: food is what we eat. Yet definitions of what can be food and what is good food differ across cultures. Approaching food as “matter considered appropriate for ingestion” enables us to see that it is a fluid and dynamic construction, shaped by history, culture, and personal experiences (Long 2015). We also further explore the concept of construction by dividing it into three levels: cultural (reflecting worldview and belief systems); social (reflecting social institutions and hierarchies of power); and personal (the experiences, values, and choices of each individual within their larger cultural and social context).

These levels of construction shape what we foods we think are tasty or disgusting, which, if any, animals we would never consider eating, what dishes we associate with different events, and what condiments we think belong on hot dogs!

That understanding of construction of food is then applied to race, illustrating how, why, and by whom the category was constructed. Such categories seem to be a natural reflection of the world, but they exist because they are useful to us in some way—keep us out of danger, help us to evaluate situations, figure out our responsibilities to other people. The category of race, however, has been a way to justify mistreatment and exploitation of large groups of people. Many white Europeans in the past (and some, unfortunately, in the present) classified Africans and Native Americans by their skin color as less than human and therefore could be used like animals. This meant that those Europeans felt that it was not immoral to take those individuals, their lands, and their possessions, and do whatever they wanted to.

(The notion of race was also constructed at times to include groups with similar skin color. The English considered the Irish to be a lesser race. This also raises questions about the relationship between ethnicity and race. In a democratic pluralistic society, the first is usually seen as a perception of heritage that can be acted upon in certain contexts by choice, while race is an assumption by others of identity, group belonging, and personal qualities based on physical features, particularly, skin color.)

Since the concept of construction can be complicated, more explanation is offered here through the lens of food. Food can be seen as having three levels of construction:

1. **Cultural construction** refers to **edibility**--what we think of as edible, or what we can eat and still be accepted as a “normal” human. This level reflects a culture’s basic beliefs about how the universe is organized and how we (humans) fit into it. For example, mainstream America sees animals as divided into several different categories: pets, domesticated animals for food, domesticated animals for work or play, wild animals for food, and wild animals. The first category is usually considered not edible at all; in fact, these animals are like family and are usually given names and personalities. Eating them would be as unthinkable as eating humans. However, some animals might be pets for some people, but be considered food by others. Rabbits, for example, used to be a

common meat for pioneers and is still eaten by many people in the US, but they seem to be shifting more to the pet category. Horses are domesticated but not considered a food in most of the U.S., although they are frequently eaten in Europe.

2. **Social construction** refers to **palatability**--notions of which foods taste good and how, when, with whom, where certain foods are desirable. Palatability reflects social institutions and hierarchies of power within a culture. We generally want to imitate individuals or groups we admire or aspire to be like. Similarly, we learn to like the foods that are eaten by those people. Wine is a good example. It is usually considered a sign of sophistication in the U.S., so individuals wanting to appear sophisticated might cultivate a taste for wine, even though they don't like it at first. Lobster is now considered a high class and expensive food, but until the latter 1800s, it was considered distasteful and even inedible, a dirty "bottom-feeder" that only fisherman, convicts, and very poor people would eat.

3. **Personal construction** refers to each individual's definitions of edibility and palatability. Each person negotiates the larger cultural and social constructions with their own experiences, circumstances, tastes, values, and personality to create their own universe of food. For example, eggs are considered both edible and palatable in American food culture, however, when I was around 5, my older brothers told me that scrambled eggs were made out of baby chickens. I was afraid to eat scrambled eggs for years afterwards because I thought I might find a baby chicken in the eggs. Even now I get queasy when scrambled eggs are too soft and runny because of what my brothers told me, even though I know they were just teasing me. That's my own personal construction of food.

It is important to remember that these constructions are active, fluid, and dynamic. This means that individuals can shift foods from one category to another—something they may need to do for health reasons. It also means that our ideas of what is edible or palatable change over time. Think about how some foods are trendy now that people maybe didn't like in the past. Korean kimchi (fermented cabbage, turnips, and other vegetables) is a good example. It can be found throughout the US now as a condiment similar to pickles or sauerkraut, but it used to be considered very "smelly," too spicy, and too foreign in mainstream America.

RESOURCES--See Appendix for more suggested readings.

**"Talking About Race" <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race>. National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution.

Markus, Hazel Rose and Paula M. L. Moya, eds. *Doing Race: 21 Essays for the 21st Century*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010.

McIntosh, Peggy. 1989. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," *Peace and Freedom Magazine*, July/August, 1989, pp. 10-12.

<https://nationalseedproject.org/Key-SEED-Texts/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack>.

Olua, Ijeoma. 2018. *So You Want to Talk About Race*. New York: Seal Press.

Omi, M. and Winant, H. (1986). *Racial formation in the united states: from the 1960s to the 1980s*. New York: Routledge.

Takaki, Ronald. 2009 (1993). *A Different Mirror: A history of Multicultural America*.

Wilkerson, Isabel. 2020. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. Random House.



UNIT II: Construction

Activity: Favorite Foods/ Disliked Foods

Materials Needed: Handout/Power Point, Pens, Paper or computer/pad for taking notes and writing essay

Outcomes: Written text based on personal ethnographic research using restaurant reviews as a model, peer reviewed rating of writing and content, class discussions on impact of historical developments and exploration of food as a personal, social and cultural construction, and publication of student writing on Food and Culture Website.

- 1) Have students name 2 foods that they dislike and 2 favorite foods. List these in two columns on the blackboard. (This can also be done privately with each student making their own list.) Depending on the students involved, you might want to take a count of how many students agree with each choice. You might want to label these as “yucky” and “yummy” although this could obviously be problematic and hurtful if not carefully done.)
- 2) Ask what is food. Have the students brainstorm about what they would consider food and what they would consider tasty food. Use examples of items not usually considered food in the mainstream US: pets, tree bark, seaweed, dirt, flowers, etc.
- 3) Introduce definition of food as “matter considered appropriate for consumption.” Emphasize that “considered” is a verb, so people are doing the considering. Ask them who taught them what could be food—parents, friends, school cafeterias, restaurants. Ask if there are any foods that they would not eat when they were younger, but that they like now.
- 4) Introduce the concept of food as a personal, social, and cultural construction. Explain each level and give examples. Then ask the students to match their lists to the levels of construction to explain their evaluations.
- 5) Hold a discussion:
 - A. What is the difference between edible and palatable?
 - B. Do they consciously think about whether foods are edible or palatable before they eat them?
 - C. Who taught them what foods were edible? (Parents, friends?)
 - D. Who taught them what foods were palatable? (Most of us think we just like things that taste good, so have them dig a little into this.)
 - E. Do their choices of disgusting and favorite foods suggest anything about their personal backgrounds, beliefs, or circumstances?
 - F. Is there a food they have learned to like (or dislike) because of the people who eat it (social construction)?
 - G. Is there any food that they find disgusting (personal construction) that other people enjoy?
 - H. What experiences have shaped their personal food universe?

CONNECTION TO CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Once students seem to understand the concept of construction in relation to food, have them apply it to race as well as other categories (ethnicity; gender; abilities; social groups within school, such as “jocks,” “science nerds,” “popular girls.”)

What is race? There are several definitions you can turn to, but it is essentially categories based on physical characteristics of individuals that then assumes specific inner qualities.

Questions to ask:

Who came up with those categories? When, where, and why?

Who decides which individuals belong to which categories?

Did any groups benefit from these categories?

Did any groups suffer because of them?

Point out that Racism assumes that every individual who fits that category shares the same inner qualities. What are their experiences with individuals from different races? Do physical features accurately tell us an individual’s personality, interests, abilities, or values? Can other people guess tell everything about them just by looking at their physical characteristics?

What categories would the class construct about themselves? Why those choices?



Key Concepts: Exploring Cultural Differences Through the Lens of Food

Unit II. CONSTRUCTION

Food as a Cultural, Social and Personal Construction

Assignment: Favorite Foods/Disliked Foods

Instructions:

1. List two foods that you dislike and two that you find tasty and your favorites.
 2. Why do you find those foods are disagreeable or tasty?
 3. Can you apply the 3 levels of construction to your choices?
 4. Have your tastes around those foods changed over time?
5. Compare your choices with those of your classmates. Are there differences?
What explains the differences?

FAVORITE FOODS	DISLIKED FOODS
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION—EDIBLE/EDIBILITY
(What we CAN eat and still be considered “normal”)

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION—PALATABLE/PALATABILITY
(What we WANT to eat; what tastes good)

PERSONAL CONSTRUCTION—INDIVIDUAL FOOD UNIVERSE
(What personal experiences, values, and tastes you have as an individual)

Keywords

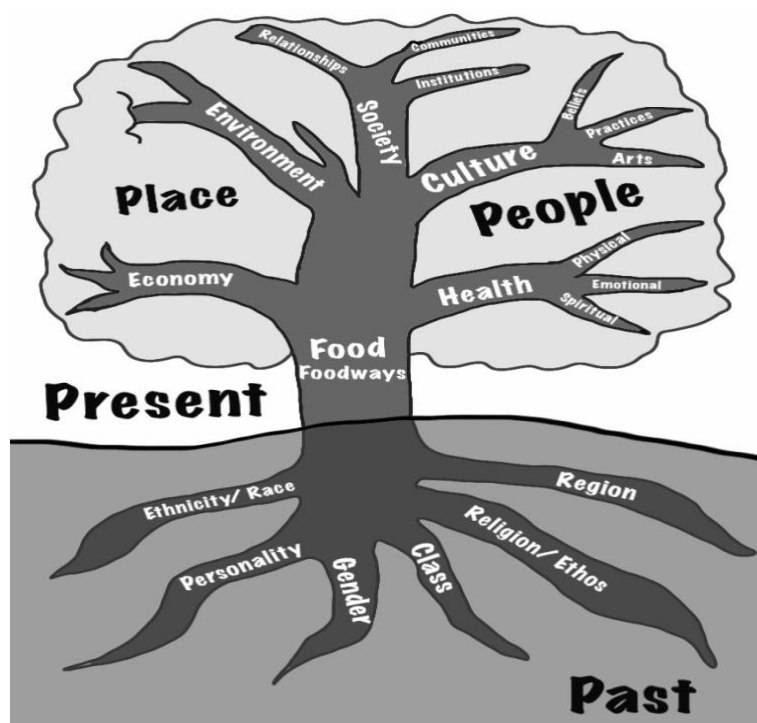
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Unit II. IDENTITY

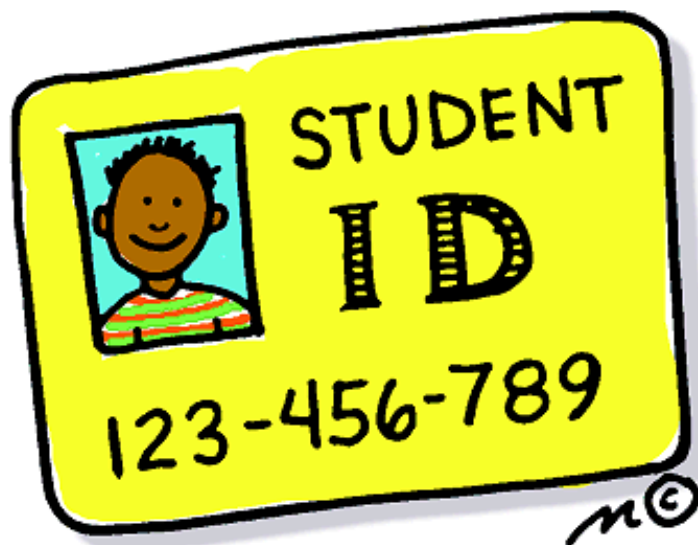
Topics: Concepts of Identity and Multiple Identities

Food choices as expression of Identity

Reading Identity Through Food

Activity 1. Create a Food Identity Collage Poster

Activity 2. Reading Identity through Sandwiches



(Clip art licensed from the Clip Art Gallery on DiscoverySchool.com)

INTRODUCTION

We all have a variety of roles in life and ways of describing ourselves: race, ethnicity, gender, age, occupation, religion, value system, ableness, personality, personal interests, and so on. One way to think about this variety is the idea of “multiple identities.” We all have many identities. We carry those with us all the time, and they each shape our opportunities and choices in life, but we do not think about them all at the same time. We tend to focus on different identities in different situations. For example, at school, we focus on our identity as a teacher (occupation), while at home, our “situational identity” is that of parent (family role).

Foodways can be used to perform or showcase an aspect of our identity. Selecting one food over another in a grocery store may reflect a regional identity; cooking or eating with certain implements may represent an ethnicity; abstinence from particular ingredients (for instance, pork or beef), may express ethical values or religious affiliations. Many of our food choices are made without intentionally performing these aspects of our identity, but they are expressions of it just the same.

For the activities, you can have students draw pictures of their food or cut them out of magazines or download them from the Internet. You can also consider having actual food in the classroom, particularly for the second activity. Items you may consider including Bread (More than one type), butter, mayonnaise, mustard, nut butters (varieties depending on allergies), jam/jelly (varieties), lunchmeat, etc.

MAKING CONNECTIONS TO CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

The two activities—Food and Identity Collage and Reading Identity Through a Sandwich--help students discover their own multiple identities and the ways in which their identities are represented through food. They also help them explore the occasions in which they are able to express or highlight their different identities through food. By starting with food in their own lives, students can then better understand the connections between other individuals and their cultural identities. They can then see that each individual can have their own identities but also be part of various groups.

The activities illustrate how we each want to be able to choose who we want to be and how we want to be perceived in a given occasion. All individuals want the freedom to choose which of their identities to highlight, but some contexts force us to recognize a different one. Sometimes an individual wants to emphasize one identity, but other people highlight a different one based on perceptions about that person (racism, ageism, ableism, classism, sectarianism). For example, an individual eating spaghetti might want to focus on their identity as an athlete and needing carbohydrates, while other people might point to their ethnicity as the reason for their food choice.

Identity is complicated but also very personal. Conflicts arise sometimes out of differences between our identities, but they also arise when those identities are misunderstood, made fun of, or dismissed. Understanding the concept of identity itself gives us insights into why it can be so problematic.

Specific food cultures have identifiable flavors, core ingredients, cooking styles, and customs around eating. These can change over time and place, and oftentimes are blended with other cuisines. Individuals and families within each culture will also have their own tastes and ways of making and eating food, so that matching food culture with identity is not always clear or easy. These assignments may encourage students to think about stereotypes associated with different cultures. This is an opportunity to discuss the differences between observable patterns of how a group of people usually do things and assumptions (stereotypes) that every individual in a group will act the same way.

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UNIT III. IDENTITY
ASSIGNMENT 1: Create a food Identity collage poster

This assignment asks you to research your own food identity, make a collage about it, write about it and present it to the class.

1. Make a list of your identities: (You do not have to include all of them!)

Nationality

Ethnicity/Cultural identity (this may be more than one- include the name of different ethnic/cultural groups that are part of your identity)

Family (and place within family)

Region

Religion

Ethos—Worldview, Belief or Value System (can be same as religion)

Gender

Age

Hobbies (this may be more than one)

Occupational (of your parents/grandparents/family) (this may be more than one)

Socioeconomic class (of your parents/grandparents/family)

2. Next to each identity, write down at least one food or dish that you connect with it and that you eat. (For instance, you might write “hot dog” next to “National” since hot dogs are seen as an American food tradition. If you are a vegetarian, consider what might be a substitute.)
List a food/dish for at least 5 of the identities. (You can have 2 from one group such as ethnic/cultural).

3. Ask a parent or other family member to add any foods/dishes you may not have listed. For instance, list any special family dishes/foods you eat for holidays, birthdays, or other occasions. For instance, Pinterest has a recipe for “Crock Pot Funeral Potatoes” which are taken to help out families in the Midwest after a funeral. (Crock pots are an electric pot used for slow cooking food away from a stove) Brainstorm which specific foods or dishes have always been eaten in your family that connect to one of the identities you listed.
4. Do an Internet search for “images” using the list you’ve created. *Pinterest* (www.pinterest.com) is a good source for food photos and recipes. You can also research food images and recipes in cookbooks at home, by asking family members for photographs, looking in cooking magazines, and local newspapers.
5. Write 5 paragraphs about your food identity. Begin by introducing the identities you’ve listed, then explain when, with whom, and where you eat each of the foods. Describe images you found in your research and whether they looked like the food your family and other identity groups actually eat. Include any foods that are unique to your family or culture.
6. Were there any surprises as you researched, in terms of realizing where a particular food came from?
How does your food identity compare to your classmates; did many of them have all the same foods?
Are there any foods that you feel people might make fun of? Are there any occasions in which you would not feel comfortable eating that food or expressing that identity?
7. End your essay with a conclusion about your food identity and how food represents your family’s culture, history, and your own personal interests and beliefs.

Print out all of the images you’ve found and make a food identity collage on a paper plate.

Present your food collage to the class and discuss what you learned from it.



UNIT III. IDENTITY

ACTIVITY 2: READING IDENTITY THROUGH FOOD—SANDWICHES

(This assignment can be used for other dishes and recipes that might be more relevant to your students. Using a well-known dish enables us to make comparisons.)

Sandwiches are a common everyday food throughout the United States—so common that we can think of them as a national food. Sandwiches can be made with different types of bread and a huge variety of fillings. They can be prepared in different ways and show up in lots of different meals. They frequently are taken on picnics or carried to school or the office. They can be a formal meal or an informal snack.

We usually think of choosing a sandwich in terms of what tastes we like, but the parts of a sandwich can reflect our identity without us being aware of it. For example, peanut butter is an American invention, and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches are distinctively American. Other cultures have their own traditions of what fillings taste good together. Also, individual identities within a culture can have differences. For example, someone who is vegetarian would have a lettuce and tomato sandwich, but not a BLT (bacon, lettuce, tomato). There might be regional or ethnic traditions as well.

For this assignment, describe all the ingredients in your favorite sandwich. Then look up the history of each of those ingredients.

SANDWICH INGREDIENTS

Bread—what type; sliced/unsliced; crusts?

Fillings—

Meats

Cheeses

Vegetables

Peanut Butter, other

Jams

Fruits

Condiments--

Sauce--butter, mayonnaise, mustard, ketchup, etc.

Spice—salt, pepper, sugar, chilis, etc.

Preparation--pickles, relish, onions, salsa, etc.

Now answer the questions below:

1. Where did each ingredient originate?
2. Are some ingredients associated with specific cultures or groups within a culture?
3. Do any of the names reflect specific cultures?
4. What different identities are in your sandwich?
5. How do these ingredients compare to your own food identity collage?
6. Which of your identities do think affected your sandwich?

Connections to Cultural Differences:

Compare your sandwich with your classmates.
 Do you like all of their choices? Do you find some disgusting?
 How would you feel if someone doesn't like your sandwich or makes fun of it?
 Does it feel like they dislike you and are making fun of you?
 Can you still eat together if everyone has different kinds of sandwiches?

Keywords

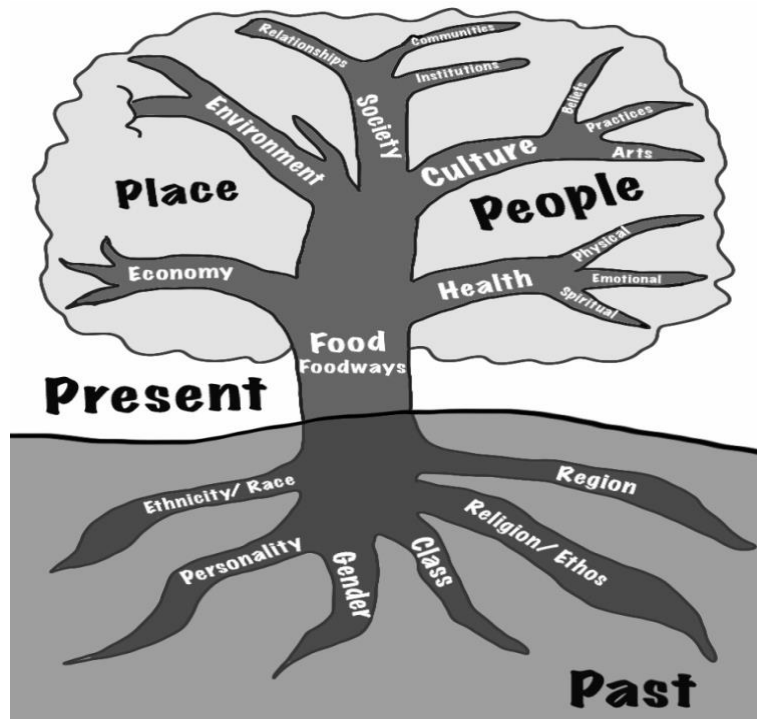
Exploring Cultural Differences Through the Lens of Food
 K-12 Curriculum Guide

Center for Food And Culture
 Lucy M. Long, Susan Eleuterio, and Jerry L. Reed, III
 (Partially funded by American Folklore Society)

May 15, 2020

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Unit IV: Meaning

Topic: What does “meaning” mean? Symbols, Rituals, Art

Activity 1: Food as Symbols

Activity 2: Food in Rituals

Activity 3: Food in Art; Food as Art

Oftentimes in talking about cultural differences, we say things like: “that action means something else in another culture” or “what did he mean by that” or “this object means a lot to me.” But what do we mean by the word “meaning”?

Meaning can be defined in two ways. First, it can be a reference to something else, such as an emotion, a value, a belief, a group, etc. Secondly, it can refer to something’s significance to us. If an object is significant to us, we feel attached to it. It is meaningful to us.

Partly because meaning itself is so complex, the meanings of our communications and interactions can easily be misunderstood. We frequently communicate meaning through symbols, rituals, and art. Symbols are objects and actions that stand for something else. Rituals are recurring symbolic activities or events, often recognizing and celebrating significant milestones in life or the seasons. Art frequently expresses our emotions and imagination. All three are used to tell other people what things mean, but all three can easily be interpreted in different ways and therefore interpreted differently from what was intended.

The meanings of food can similarly include a variety of things, including its significance, the purpose behind consuming it, the beliefs expressed through it, the emotions associated with it, the memories attached to it, its role in social status, or its use in celebrating historical events or cultural identity. Food also can be misunderstood: a gift of chocolate could mean a romantic interest or simply a friendly gesture; a birthday cake can simultaneously celebrate a person’s life and make them sad to recognize the passage of time; a contribution of a green bean casserole to a potluck could be interpreted as showing a lack of culinary skill or it could be a way to try to please the other diners.

Exploring how meaning is attached to food, communicated to other people, and interpreted—or misinterpreted--can help us better understand meaning in cultural differences. It can also illustrate how easy it is for misunderstandings to occur. This unit focuses on three aspects of meaning in relation to food: symbol, ritual, and art.

Food is oftentimes used as a symbol, it carries meanings beyond its functional and nutritional values. This assignment uses apples to illustrate the principles of symbols: meaning is not intrinsic to an object or action; meaning is attached to those symbols and can change over time and place; meaning can be interpreted in multiple ways; and the

intended meaning can be misunderstood. (See Appendix for more discussion of symbols and rituals.) Symbols also tap into our emotions and sometimes spur us to action.

Food frequently plays a major role in rituals and festive events, celebrating individuals, groups, and ideas. The food itself can be symbols, but also the preparation of food, giving it, gathering to eat, and eating it can be symbolic rituals. Rituals can have a variety of functions and can mean different things to different people. As rites of unity, they celebrate togetherness and bring people together (family reunions, national holidays). As rites of affirmation, they celebrate an individual or a group (birthday parties, anniversaries) as well as ideas or beliefs (Earth Day, Easter.) Rites of spectacle celebrate abundance (thanksgiving dinner), while rites of season celebrate the seasons (thanksgiving again, or even Memorial Day as the beginning of summer).

A major type of ritual are rites of passage. These mark transitions from one stage to another, such as birthday parties, graduations, weddings, funerals, oftentimes tying us to the larger natural cycle of life. A final type is rite of reversal, rituals in which everything seems to be turned upside down. On Halloween, for example, children can demand candy from strangers, stay up past their bedtimes, and dress in costumes to pretend to be something they're not. These are things not normally allowed, reversing the normal order of life. That reversal is only temporary, however, and usually shows that the benefits of the usual order—getting sick from eating too much candy proves your parents are right in restricting how much candy you eat!

Art is frequently thought of in our society as something that can be done only by people with special talent. We approach art here as an attention to the beauty of something and the pleasure it brings us beyond its practical utility. From this perspective, any expression of creativity and imagination can be considered art, and the reaction to that art can be an aesthetic experience, a full engagement of the senses. We also tend to judge art according to how we respond to it, but each society also develops guidelines for what it considers to be “good art.”

Food oftentimes brings aesthetic pleasure (or sometimes disappointment), and we often choose to eat what is tasty to us. Any type of food--mass produced, gourmet, or made by the hands of a grandmother--can be an artistic medium and serve as a resource for artistic creativity and personal and communal expression. Our aesthetic response to that food can be very personal and can differ from other people's responses, including restaurant critics and culinary experts. Like symbols, art can be interpreted in multiple ways.

Activity 1: Symbol: apples—Introduces the concept of symbol by exploring the variety of things an apple can stand for in American culture.

It has long been a tradition in America to give teachers apples or objects shaped like apples as a gift. No one knows for sure how this began, but we do know that in the 1800s and the early 1900s, teachers in the United States were sometimes paid with food instead of money. At this time, many people were farmers and teachers sometimes lived with the families where they taught because neither the families nor the teachers had much money. This was especially true during a time called the Great Depression where many people were poor. Perhaps because of this tradition, apples have become symbolic of teachers and school.

Apples as symbols also have other meanings. They stand for wisdom and long life in Judeo-Christian, Greek, Norse and Irish stories, but they also stand for temptation in the Old Testament of the Bible. They frequently symbolize health: an American proverb states “an apple a day keeps the doctor away,” and “apple-cheeked” children are healthy and robust. Today, they tend to be seen as all-American (“as American as apple pie”), even though the fruit originated in central Asia (mountains of Kazakhstan) and then been cultivated throughout the world. An American associated with apples is John Chapman, better known as Johnny Appleseed, who planted apple trees in the eastern Midwest in the early 1800s.

Because apples are so well known, they have acquired both cultural and personal meanings. Ask students for their own memories and meanings of the fruit before giving them background history. Ask them what it means to give an apple to someone, to say “an apple a day keeps the doctor away,” or to call someone “the apple of my eye.” Can there be multiple meanings? Can there be misunderstandings?

Asking students for their own memories of apples helps them recognize their meaningfulness or significance to them. Comparing those memories makes them aware of the possibility of different meanings. Exploring the history of apples and the sayings connected to them also helps students understand that symbols are created in certain times and places—and can also be misinterpreted.

Activity 2: Food as Ritual: Birthday cakes—Introduces the definition of ritual and the different types of rituals by having students describe a common food symbol for birthdays—the birthday cake.

Historically, items like sugar were expensive and difficult to obtain, so many cultures reserved sweets for special occasions such as holidays or birthdays. The American custom of putting candles on a cake to symbolize birthdays seems to have come from a German tradition of having special cakes for children. Now it is such a popular ritual that other items can be used as substitutes for cakes, oftentimes with candles added—a slice of watermelon, a doughnut, a pie. The cake itself is not as important as the ritual. It shows an individual that people recognize and celebrate their existence. And if family or friends forget a cake on that special day? Disaster!

Birthday cakes are good examples of rituals—recurring symbolic events. Giving or sharing a cake symbolizes belonging, affection, friendship. It says that person matters and has significance to other people.

This assignment asks students to discuss familiar rituals around birthday cakes, but also talk about their feelings when those rituals happen (or don’t happen). Bringing up their own memories helps them understand that rituals can tap into emotions. The assignment also has students think up ways to use cakes to create all the types of rituals. This can be the basis for planning a party, something that should appeal to most students!

Activity 3: Art: design in fruit displays—Explores the idea of expressing creativity and imagination through arranging displays of fruit and by drawing fruit.

Artistic imagination can be expressed through food in many different ways: bowls of fruit on a counter, cans lined up in a cupboard, paintings of vegetables in a still life, displays at

grocery stores or farmer's markets, the arrangement of food on a plate. Our responses to those expressions can be very personal but also reflect the aesthetic expectations of our culture.

This assignment asks students to make artistic displays of fruit and vegetables. This can be done with the actual objects, with cut out pictures, or with drawings. The students' personal reactions to this should be discussed and compared. Why does one individual like a certain display but not others? Why do some displays seem more attractive to others? Differences in personal taste should be obvious, and those differences should be recognized. The teacher can also lead the students in a discussion of the formal qualities of art that trained artists would look for. They can then compare their own tastes, and discuss what aspects of the displays are satisfying or dissatisfying to them.

Once the students have examined their own aesthetics, they should look for examples of artistic displays of food in real life. They can look in their own homes as well as outside in public spaces. Does their family set the table a certain way? Arrange the food on their plates in a way that seems aesthetic? Make the food itself look artistic? (Think of cakes and cookies as artistic creations.) Have they seen fruit displayed at stores or farmer's markets? What shapes are used for those displays? Why do they think the grocer or farmer tries to make the fruit look pretty? Does their school cafeteria treat food as an artistic expression? Do they have suggestions for making it more aesthetically pleasing?

Connections to Cultural Difference

Exploring the concepts of symbols, rituals, and art through food will help students understand that meaning is complicated, dynamic, and fluid. That can then help them to understand how and why interactions and communications around cultural differences can also be complicated—and misunderstandings can easily arise.

These assignments will also help students understand how meaning is tied to their emotions, helping them understand why discussions about differences can become very personal.

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UNIT IV: MEANING
Activity 1: FOOD AS SYMBOL--APPLES



Do you like apples? How do you like to eat them?

**What memories do you have of apples? (Did you ever pick apples at an orchard?)
Are they happy memories? Do they remind you of certain people or places?**

Have you ever seen apples or images of apples used as decorations?

Have you ever given an apple or a present shaped like an apple to anyone?

Do you know these sayings about apples? What do they mean?

“An apple a day keeps the doctor away”

“You’re the apple of my eye.”

“He/she’s a bad apple.”

“apple cheeked children”

“The apple does not fall far from the tree.”

“There is little choice in a barrel of rotten apples.” (Shakespeare)

**Compare your responses with your classmates.
What are the similarities and what are the differences?**

UNIT IV: MEANING

Activity 2: FOOD AS RITUAL—BIRTHDAY CAKES



Draw or cut out a picture of your favorite birthday food treat or what you would like to have as a food birthday treat. (It doesn't have to be birthday cake).

Why is this your favorite? What makes it special?

Is it something you usually don't get to eat?

Is it a tradition in your family?

Does your family have different kinds of cakes for birthdays?

Who chooses them? Who makes them?

Do you always put candles on your birthday cakes?

What do you do with the candles?

What other activities happen around the birthday cake?

(Sing Happy Birthday? Give gifts? Eat other foods? Play games?)

Discussion questions:

How does the birthday cake make you feel? (happy, proud, sad?)

How would you feel if there is no birthday cake on your birthday?

How would you feel if the cake is not the kind you want?

What could you do if you want to celebrate someone's birthday, but you don't have a cake or candles to give them?

Can you think of ways that cakes can be used for different types of rituals?

Rites of Unity

Rites of Affirmation

Rites of Season

Rites of Passage

Rites of Spectacle

Rites of Reversal

UNIT IV: MEANING

Activity 3: FOOD AS ART—DESIGN IN FRUIT DISPLAYS



This assignment asks students to make artistic displays of fruit and vegetables. This can be done with the actual objects, with cut out pictures, or with drawings.

- The students' personal reactions to this should be discussed and compared.
- Why does one individual like a certain display but not others?
- Why do some displays seem more attractive to others?

Differences in personal taste should be obvious, and those differences should be recognized. The teacher can also lead the students in a discussion of the formal qualities of art that trained artists would look for. They can then compare their own tastes, and discuss what aspects of the displays are satisfying or dissatisfying to them.

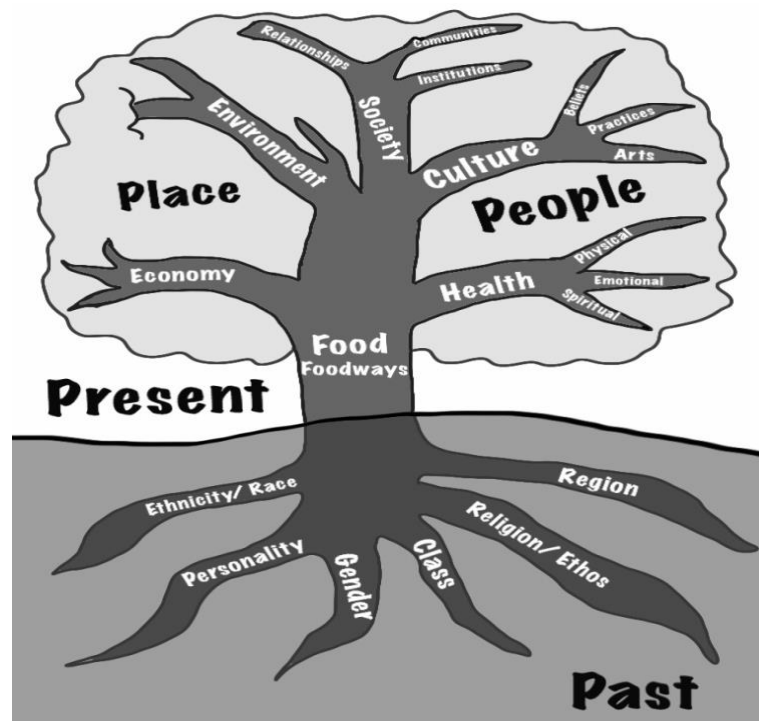
Once the students have examined their own aesthetics, they should look for examples of artistic displays of food in real life. They can look in their own homes as well as outside in public spaces.

- Does their family set the table a certain way?
- Arrange the food on their plates in a way that seems aesthetic? Make the food itself look artistic? (Think of cakes and cookies as artistic creations.)
- Have they seen fruit displayed at stores or farmer's markets? What shapes are used for those displays?
- Why do they think the grocer or farmer tries to make the fruit look pretty?
- Does their school cafeteria treat food as an artistic expression?
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UNIT V: Systems/Structures

Topic: Systemic Discrimination, Structural Inequalities

Foodways network, Food system

Activity 1: Foodways of Favorite Food

Activity 2: Follow a Food Through the Food System

Systems/Structures—Discussions of cultural differences frequently refer to systems and structures, as in “systemic racism,” institutional racism,” or “structural inequality.” What do those phrases mean and why are they used?

A **system** is a set of parts that work together to make up a whole. The parts are interconnected, so that if one changes, it affects the others. Society can be seen as a system with different parts (organizations and institutions such as the family, religion, education, government).

Those parts are also the **structures** that keep the overall system working, but systems can develop that are not equal for everyone. In that case, the structures discriminate against some people while keeping the system going well for others. The idea of systems recognizes that individuals live within larger structures that shape them and their relationships regardless of their actual beliefs about equality and respect. An individual then might face a discriminatory social system even though the individuals within that system are actually supportive.

This unit explores those ideas through two closely related ideas: food systems and foodways. The first looks at external systems put in place by governments and usually tied to economic systems. The second is more personal and takes into account each individual’s experiences and circumstances.

Food system refers to the ways in which food moves from production to disposal. Links in between this “food chain” include how food is processed, packaged, marketed, distributed, and consumed. Economic systems are a significant part of food systems as are transportation networks, agricultural industries, and food retailers and restaurants. Food systems are also now recognized as central to the sustainability of the environment.

Contemporary Industrial Food System

Production—Processing—Packaging—Marketing—Distribution—Consumption—Disposal

Having so many links in this chain makes it very complex—numerous people and organizations are involved, so that if any problems arise, the whole system can be disrupted (which means we don’t get healthy food!). Also, within this system, food simply becomes a commodity, valued by how much money it brings in. The people in the system also become commodities, valued by how much they cost, spend, or make. While the system has brought some advantages (wider variety of foods available, food in cities, all year round, etc.), it also carries serious environmental, economic, social, and cultural consequences. Initiatives to “recouple” the food system and link people to people include farmers markets, CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), composting, community gardens, and others.

Foodways is distinguished from food system by being more of a personal perspective. It refers to the total network of practices and concepts surrounding food and eating. It includes food as product (ingredient, recipe, dish, meal, meal system), the processes attached to food (production, procurement, preservation, preparation, presentation, consumption, cleanup and disposal), and performance (contexts for foodways, concepts about healthy and good food, performing identity and meaning through food). Foodways illustrates how systems work: all the parts are connected, so that if one part is changed, it affects the others. That helps to explain why changing a system can be so difficult. Foodways also helps us see where and when memories and emotions were attached to particular foods, helping us understand the meanings foods hold for each individual. An individual's personal foodways can be compared to their culture's food system to see how their own choices and habits are shaped by the system.

Activity 1: The Foodways of a Favorite Food--Introduces students to the idea of systems and structures by having them describe the foodways of one of their favorite foods.

This illustrates how all the parts work together as a system to create that meal and how various structures keep that system (the meal) going. External structures include things like parents, school, the weather; internal structures include the student's likes and dislikes, food experiences, even their personality. Personal foodways can be compared with the food system of the same item. What structures affect that foodways?

This can be done with the same food for all students so that they can compare their foodways with each other. Effective choices include common foods such as chili, pizza, hamburgers, ice cream. The sandwich assignment in the unit on Identity can also be revised for these concepts. (This assignment can be adapted to a single ingredient, a specific meal, individuals, and groups.)

Have students present their foodways description the class. Help them discuss how their foods compare in terms of similar foodways practices? How did they differ? Can they identify the structures (parents, schools, local food system) that have shaped their foodways? Can they see ways in which the local economy, cultural and political history, immigration and migration, and other aspects of the local environment have impacted their foodways, and that of their families, for the class as a whole, and in their local area?

Activity 2: Follow a Food Through the Food System—Introduces students to the idea of food system and all the parts in that system by tracing a specific food from its production to its disposal.

Select a food product that is well known and easily studied, such as milk, apple, chocolate, hamburgers. Follow the food through each link in the food system chain.

Contemporary Industrial Food System

Production—Processing—Packaging—Marketing—Distribution—Consumption—Disposal

This can easily be done with students placed in groups around different foods or parts of the food chain. The assignment can also focus on the specific location of the students. Ask "who feeds Toledo (for example)?" Students might name specific restaurants or grocery stores. Ask where their food comes from and have students follow the chain. Also ask who eats there and what happens to the food that is not eaten. For example:

Toledo<Tony Packo's (pork hot dog)<pig farm (pigs eat grains)<grain farmer (need tractors to harvest)< John Deere (need steel to manufacture tractors)< steel manufacturing< Etc.

Lead a discussion on the impacts the food system has had on their own food habits. Has it shaped their access to food? Are they aware of any food deserts in their area? Are there institutions such as local and ethnic grocery stores, growers, farmers markets, or other places that provide new and different foods and/or which provide foods traditional to student's cultures? Are they aware of environmental issues around the disposal of food waste?

**Also see the Center's two documentary videos and discussion guides on composting and farmers markets. (Many excellent resources are available for studying the food system and educators are encouraged to access these: for example, [http://www.foodspanlearning.org/lesson-plans/unit-1-meet-the-food-system/.](http://www.foodspanlearning.org/lesson-plans/unit-1-meet-the-food-system/))

Connections to Cultural Difference

Once the concepts of systems and structures are understood through food, they can be transferred to race, class, and gender. While we do not speak of "race systems" in the same way we speak of "foodways" or "food systems," we can see how our society as a system historically developed around racism and other inequalities based on other identities. Certain groups benefited from that system, while others were limited in their economic, political, and social opportunities. Various institutions—structures—within society supported each other and by doing so, supported that discrimination. Looking at the history of the nation from the perspectives of different groups of people helps identify the structures as well as the place of those groups within the larger system. This can be seen in our individual foodways as well as the national food system.

These assignments will also help students understand how individuals living within these systems might not agree with them and might try to change them, but systems tend to be perpetuate themselves and are hard to change. Also, individuals might benefit or have opportunities limited without recognizing the role of their group identity within the system. For example, they may feel that they choose a food because of the way it tastes, not realizing that it is only available in their region or even household. Furthermore, some individuals are able to overcome or challenge the structures; individuals might decide to shop at a farmers market rather than a supermarket in order to make their own foodways more local.

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Discussion guide: <https://foodandculture.org/center-projects/activity-guides-community-foodways-northwest-ohio/>.

Garth, Hanna and Ashanté M. Reese, eds. 2020. *Black Food Matters: Racial Justice in the Wake of Food Justice*. University of Minnesota Press.

Higgins, Lisa L. and Katherine Haag Rogers. 2018. Eating Your Homework: One Family's Intersections of Science, Place, Foodways, and Education. *Journal of Folklore and Education*. 5: 53-63.

Lexicon of Food: <http://lexiconofsustainability.com/lexicon-of-food/>

Long, Lucy M. ed., *The Food and Folklore Reader*. Bloomsbury, 2015.

Long, Lucy M. "Foodways: Using Food to Teach Folklore Theories and Methods: in "Eating Across the Curriculum," *Digest*, Vol. 19, 1999.

Sample Food Reviews

https://www.scholastic.com/content/dam/teachers/lesson-plans/migrated-featured-files/sample_food_reviews.pdf (Not meal reviews but good examples of detailed writing)

Yelp Reviews Guidelines: <https://www.yelp.com/guidelines>



UNIT V: Systems/Structures
Activity 1: FOODWAYS OF A FAVORITE DISH

This can be adapted to a single ingredient, a specific meal, individuals, and groups.
Describe the foodways of your favorite dish and/or its ingredients:

Foodways Product— Name and description of dish, List of ingredients, Recipe

Foodways Processes—describe where, when, who, how, and why for each activity

Production (How was it produced; who made it; where?)

Procurement (where and how did you get the food? If you purchased it, how much did it cost?)

Preservation (how is the food preserved until it is consumed? Refrigerator?)

Preparation (who prepares it? How? How did they acquire those skills?)

Presentation (how is the food presented? Table settings? Dishware?)

Consumption (How is the dish eaten—by hand, chopsticks, utensils?)

Clean-up/Disposal (What happens to left-overs and table scraps? Who cleans the dishes and how?)

Foodways Performances—

Contexts (usual places for eating this food—kitchen, restaurant, outside, etc.)

Concepts (how does this food affect your health or body?)

Place in Meal System (What time of day; day of week?)

Rituals, Holidays or Celebrations—Is this food used in any rituals, holidays or celebrations? Do other people share those uses or are they personal to you or your friends or family?

Meanings—Do you have any special memories of this food? Do other people share those memories?



UNIT V: Systems/Structures
Activity 2: Follow a Food Through the Food System

Select a food and follow it through each link in the food system chain.

Ask who, where, and how for each link.

Are there environmental issues connected to any links?

Are there economic issues connected to any links?

Does your area have any “food deserts,” neighborhoods with little access to healthy and affordable food?

Are there any farmers markets, CSAs, or other initiatives that try to “re-couple” the food chain and bring producers together with consumers in your area?

Do you know any individuals involved in any of these links?

How does this chain impact your own food habits?

Contemporary Industrial Food System

Production—Processing—Packaging—Marketing—Distribution—Consumption—Disposal