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Trinity College

An Introduction to the Culture of Ancient Greece through Primary Sources

Topic and Context:

We designed our curriculum project for a sixth grade level social studies class in the state of Connecticut. It was created specifically with Hartford urban schools in mind, using our placement experience as a guide, but it would work in other kinds of Connecticut schools as well. Homework assignments such as chapter readings, worksheets and homework questions will be given to the students to be completed on their own time.

Objectives:

- Students will understand the different aspects of culture and be ready to use them to look at different historical/cultural groups that will be studied in later units.
- Students will develop the skill of organizing information with the aid of a graphic organizer.
- Students will learn how to investigate primary sources to gain insight into the culture of ancient Greece.
- Students will develop critical thinking skills by comparing their own culture with that of Ancient Greece.
- Students will build their interpersonal skills and learn from each other while working in groups.

- Students will make connections between ancient Greek society and modern society.

Justification:

We chose the topic of Ancient Greek culture because we think it is very important for children to understand the concepts of culture and be able to understand that their own culture is only one of an infinite number in the world. According to the Connecticut curricular framework, one of the goals for the 6th-8th grade levels is to have students “Demonstrate an understanding of the concept of culture and how different perspectives emerge from different cultures” (pg. 148). Knowing that the sixth grade curriculum includes an introduction to Ancient Greece, we thought it would be a good idea to start with an early historical group like the Greeks. The use of primary sources to access information about Greek culture should help with the second part of the goal that concerns different perspectives. One cannot learn about another perspective by being told about it by a third party; they must see first hand what that perspective is through the words of the person that holds it.

We also hope to achieve some other less grand goals in our unit. The Connecticut framework states the goal of “applying concepts from the study of history, culture, economics, and government to the understanding of relationships among science, technology, and society” (pg.150). Although this is not the main goal of our project, we think that it will be at least partially achieved in the portion of the lesson where students are asked to pull out some things that they see or experience in modern life that stem from Ancient Greece

As a social studies course we think it is very important that students understand the history of citizenship and what it means in different contexts. The Connecticut curricular framework suggests that students be able to “demonstrate an understanding of how ideas, principles, and practices of citizenship have emerged over time and across cultures” (pg. 148). We think that it is especially important for students to understand the concepts of democratic citizenship because that is the type of citizenship that they must learn to practice. Ancient Greece had the first large scale democracy in history, but it is important to note that there were limitations on this democracy.

Our unit includes primary sources because we think that it is easiest to relate to a culture if you are looking at it through the eyes of someone in it. There is a writing assignment at the end which asks students to put themselves in the shoes of an Ancient Greek and describe a typical day. This will help students develop their interpersonal skills, one of Gardner’s eight types of intelligences, which is practiced when a student must attempt to understand the feelings and intentions of others (Theories of intelligence, 3). Primary sources also ask students to analyze things that are foreign to them and try to make sense of them using context. This combined with the comparison of their culture with that of Ancient Greece will incorporate the higher levels of Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom’s Taxonomy).

Group work is an essential part of this unit because development of interpersonal skills is a goal of the unit and also because in our experience in Hartford schools, we found that students are often more productive when they work together. Students that have difficulty focusing would concentrate on the work in order to teach it to their fellow

students. We wanted to take advantage of the way that students played off of one another to help them absorb the information provided in this unit.

Day One/Lesson #1 Introduction to the unit and review of elements of culture

Objectives of Lesson #1

In this lesson we expect the students to activate their prior knowledge concerning culture. The beginning of the lesson will be a review for the students. We will address the basic elements of culture as we place them in a culture web during class discussion. The students should already be familiar with some basic elements of culture as well as the culture web since we dealt these topics in our last unit that covered the elements of culture. The students will develop the skill of organizing information by using the graphic organizer. The students will also be introduced to the unit's core question. *What is the culture of Ancient Greece?* The students will be conscious that our main goal throughout this unit is to answer this core question.

Day One: We will begin with an introduction to the unit and a brief review of the elements of culture. Students will then be instructed to create a graphic organizer (culture web) on a sheet of paper showing the basic elements of culture (Food, clothing, transportation, sports, literature, music, art, architecture, religion, etc.) We will model the culture web on the board for the students. Then the students will be asked to recall some basic knowledge of ancient Greece from readings that we assigned the day before. Using the culture web as a guide we will have a class discussion that draws on their newly acquired knowledge of ancient Greece from their readings. The students will be instructed to fill out a separate culture web depicting ancient Greek culture during our discussion. We will guide and prompt the discussion with questions such as: *What did*

Grecians eat? What did they use for transportation? What did the Grecians wear? What was their government like? Etc. After brainstorming we will introduce the unit's core question to the students. *What is the culture of ancient Greece?* We will inform the students that through further investigation we will answer this question. The students will have the benefit of referring to the ancient Greece culture web thought the unit. We will hand out a vocabulary sheet that coincides with the unit which the students will fill out as we move along. The core question will be written on the blackboard to help guide the students throughout the unit. We will close this lesson by touching on some other readings assigned the day before which discussed the geographic features of Greece and how geography affects culture. We will then initiate some discussion between the geography of Greece to the geography of Connecticut and allow the students to compare and contrast. This will allow the students to realize the impact geography has on people's lives. Several questions dealing with geography will be assigned for homework which we will go over with the students at the start of the next class.

Day Two/Lesson #2 Analyzing Quotes (Primary Sources)

Objectives of Lesson #2 (Two day Lesson)

Students will be asked to analyze primary sources and draw conclusions about the culture of ancient Greece. The primary documents consist of quotes from several famous Greeks, (Aristotle, Diogenes, Hippocrates, Pericles, Sophocles and Epictetus). These Greeks comment on the various aspects of Greek culture and will give the students a unique insight into what the Greeks thought was important in their culture. The quotes will help guide the students toward answering the core question of this unit. Two quotes

will be discussed on the first day of this lesson and four will be addressed on the second day.

Day Two:

We will begin lesson two by reviewing the homework questions assigned the day before. As a class we will discuss how the geography of ancient Greece affected the people that lived there and how our geography here in Connecticut affects us now. This will help the students realize how different geographic locations impact the inhabitation of those particular places. After our discussion the students will be assigned to groups of three or four. The groups will be arranged heterogeneously, allowing the students to learn from one another more effectively. At that time we will explain to the students that they will be analyzing quotes from actual Greeks who lived during the 5th century. The first Grecian Quote will be passed out to each student. There will be one quote from each famous Greek and three questions under each quote that students must try and answer in their groups. Example 1: *“The clatter of chariots filled the arena, and the dust flew up as they sped along in a dense mass, each driver goading his team to draw clear of the axles and panting steeds.”* –Epictetus. Example of Questions: *What do you think this event is? Where would you place this on your culture web? What does this quote tell you about ancient Greek culture?* This quote stresses the passion that the Greek’s had for sports and games. It will allow us the students to connect those sports and games to the modern day Olympics and possibly car racing. Example 2: *“Life is short, art is long.”* –Hippocrates. Example 3: *“At his best, man is the noblest of all animals; separated from law and justice he is the worst.”* –Aristotle. Example 4: *“The foundation of every state is the education of its youth.”* –Diogenes. Again, each quote will be followed by three

questions that the students will try and answer with their groups. Some other examples of questions are as follows: *What is this quote saying? What do you think this quote means? Where would you place this on your culture web? What does this quote tell you about ancient Greek culture?* We will read each quote aloud to the students and discuss any difficulties they may have with the quote's vocabulary. We will encourage them to refer to their culture webs and to consult the class dictionary if they need to. We will then instruct them to discuss the quote and answer the questions within their groups. During their group assignments we will move around the classroom monitoring the students and steer their discussions in the right direction if needed. Our plan for the first day of this lesson is to have each student analyze one quote using this format. The teacher will pass out the quotes and help students if they do not understand what is being said. Students will be encouraged to ask each other questions and help their other group members. Students will be asked to fill out the answers to the questions about their quote and turn them in for homework.

Day Three:

On the third day of class, the students will be asked to get back in their groups from the previous day. Students will have time to review their quotes and to make sure all of the group's members agree about what it means and what it says about Greek culture. Each student is responsible for explaining his or her quote to the rest of the group. Teachers will walk around the room and help group members communicate with each other about their quotes. Students will be encouraged to through books, provided by the teachers, with illustrations or photographs of Greek art. Each group will find two pictures that relate to one or two of their quotes.

After groups have had time to review their quotes and find pictures, each group will present the quotes that they were given to interpret. Each student will read his or her quote and give a brief description and explain what it means in layman's terms. They will also say what the quote told them about Greek culture. After each student presents their quote they will place what it says about Greek culture in the web on the board. For example, if a student had a quote about chariot races, he or she would write chariot races in the bubble for festivities, sports, and entertainment. As a final part of each group must share with the class one or two things that they have seen in their lives that relates to Greek culture. These things could range from a sighting of Greek style columns on a building, a movie that takes place in ancient Greece, or a word that comes from Greek. The teacher will assign each student an individual presentation grade and a group presentation grade which will be averaged together.

Day 4

Presentations often run longer than expected so the lesson for this day is flexible in the amount of time it will be given based on whether time is needed to finish the presentations from the third lesson. After the presentations are completed, students will be asked to get back into their groups for discussion and brainstorming. The teacher will give out instructions for a short writing assignment about Greek culture. The following assignment will be distributed to each student:

Write about a typical day in the life of a person living in Ancient Greece. Write from the perspective of someone living in Greece at the time, either in the form of a journal entry describing a specific day or a description of your usual daily routine. You can include: where you slept, what you ate, where you went and what you did or saw there, etc. Be creative and use your culture web if you get stuck.

Each group will discuss the assignment and brainstorm what a day in the life of a Greek would include using what they learned so far in the unit. After a few minutes student will be given time to work on their writing assignments which will be due on the class following the last class of the unit. Because we understand that formal writing assignments are involved processes for sixth grade students, the assignment will be a casual, low pressure project. It will be graded for content, creativity, and effort.

Day 5

The final day of the unit will focus on bringing everything together and on having kids make comparisons between Greek culture and their own culture. Students will brainstorm in groups, with each group filling out a ven-diagram. When students have filled in their ven diagrams each group will share what they have written and the teacher will construct a master diagram on the board or overhead projector. The teacher will try to give all the students positive feedback for the connections that they make between Ancient Greek culture and their own culture as students in Hartford. If this lesson is completed early students will be give time to work on their writing assignments that are due the following class.

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on work for each day. They have homework assignments on day one and day two, the questions about geography and the questions about their quote. On day three they will be evaluated on their presentation in groups, with both an individual and a group grade. Students will be evaluated on their group ven diagram, and finally on the writing assignment. This varied array of assignments for

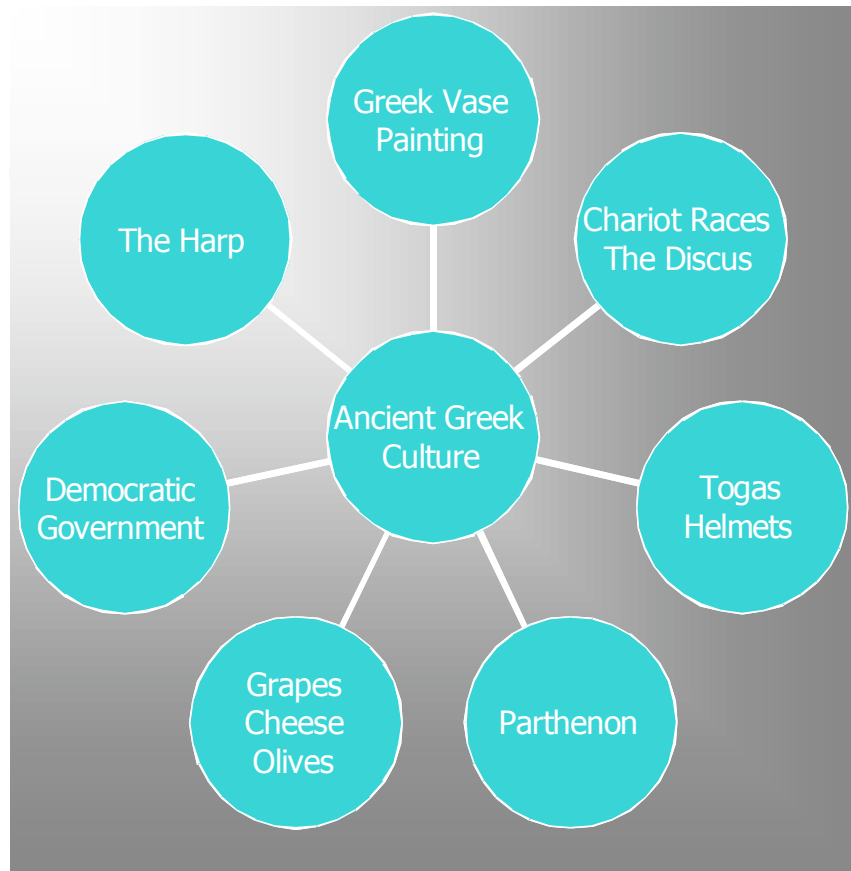
evaluation will allow the teacher to keep track of what the students are getting out of the unit and to give each student the opportunity to show different strengths.

References

“Social Studies Curriculum Framework” *The Connecticut Framework: K-12 Curricular Goals and Standards*. Connecticut Department of Education.
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"Theory of Multiple Intelligences." Project SUMIT.
<<http://pzweb.harvard.edu/sumit/MISUMIT.htm>>.

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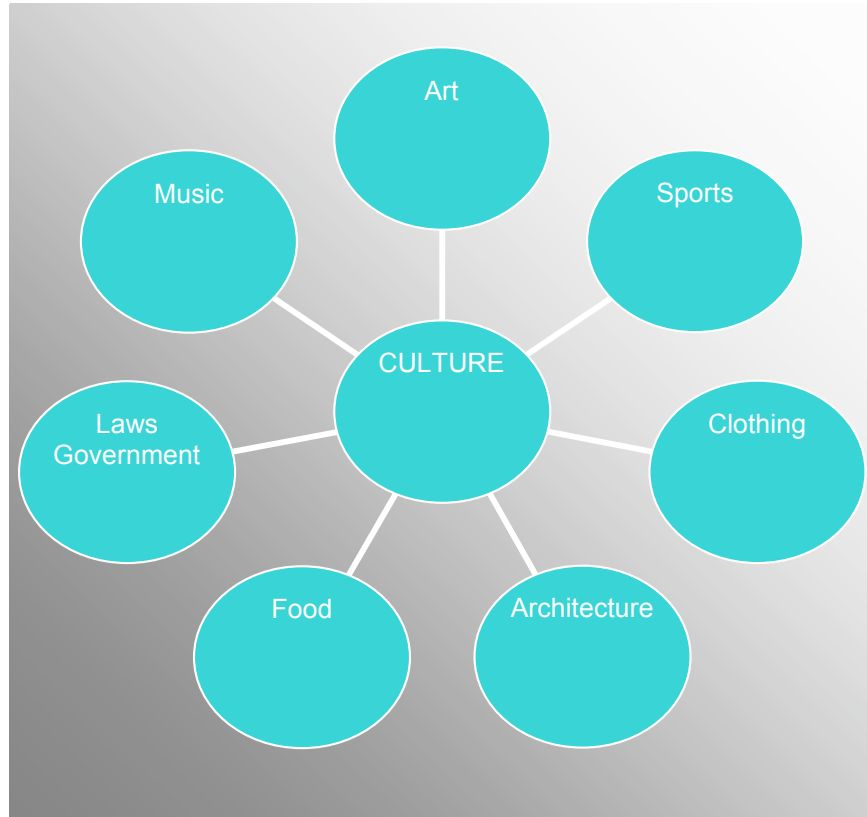


Graphic Organizer

The Ancient Greek Culture Web

Graphic Organizer

The Basic Elements of Culture



Greek Culture ven diagram

Directions: In your groups discuss what you have learned about Greek culture and think about how these things are similar or different to what you experience in your culture here in Connecticut. Place Greek cultural aspects in the left circle, your cultural aspects in the right circle and things that are similar in the overlapping portion. Your group will share its ideas with the class when you have completed the diagram.

