

SOCIAL STUDIES

CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

GRADES: 3-6

MATERIALS:

- world map
- imitation passport
- information on various cultures' Christmas customs
- various materials depending on the country

METHOD:

1. Each student is assigned a team work research project. They must research an American Christmas custom, tell what it is, where it originated, any special significance and draw or copy a picture of it. They find many of their answers as we learn about the customs in other countries.
2. We brainstorm all the American Christmas customs we can think of to begin this assignment. I put them on slips of paper and let each team draw out a custom or some years I have them write the ones that interest them and match them by interest.
3. Here are some common American Customs to Research:
 - Christmas trees
 - Christmas cards
 - gift giving
 - Santa Claus
 - Christmas dinner/feast
 - candles

- Yule log
- nativity
- mistletoe, holly and evergreen
- wreaths
- Caroling

4. I choose a number of countries to study for this unit. Here is a list of the ones I choose this year:

- England – Happy Christmas
- Mexico – Feliz Navidad
- Germany – Froelhlliche Weihnachten
- Sweden – Gud Jul
- Denmark and Norway – Glaedelig Jul, Norway = God Jul og Godt
- Netherlands – Hartlijke Kerstroeten
- Russia – Hristos Razdajetsja
- Italy – Guon Natale

5. I begin by telling the kids what countries we will be studying. We discuss them and they locate them on a world map worksheet I give out. (It is part of a packet that also includes the above greetings in a list and a word search, a place for the kids to list American customs with enough room to tell where they started later. It also has a couple of color sheets that show flags and an International Christmas tree. I don't particularly care for color sheets, but some of my kids just love them. Each student starts a folder for Christmas carols of the World and a Multicultural Recipe book).

6. I will start with France because Dec. 4th, St. Barbara's Day, is the starting of the Christmas holidays. We learn a lot about France's customs. We also learn about their flag and their location on the map. Basic Information on France's customs:

- Soucope – water soaked wheat grains placed in dishes and set to germinate. fast growing = good crops for next year. The soucope is placed next to the creche as a symbol of an the offering of a

living thing. ACTIVITY: In fifth grade coincides with our plant chapter in science.

- We plant grains in saucers, some with dirt, some on a sponge, some just water, some crowded, some not. When they sprout we set next to a miniature creche I bring in.
- Strong religious accent – French display miniature nativity scene, the creche, lit by the glow of candles and incense while bells are rung. Creches are carefully set up with a back drop of greens. A lighted star is suspended over the creche. The family gathers around and sings as petite Jesus is placed in the manger. The three Kings are not placed there until Jan. 6th. ACTIVITY: students may make dipped candles, set in a pie tin with plaster and decorate with plastic greens.
- Reveillon – a luxurious meal of oysters and special wines and sausages following midnight mass.
- Caroling – has a very early beginning in France. Called Noels in France. Poor often sing in the streets during the season and money is tossed out windows to them. We will go caroling, but usually, the last day before Christmas break. Many other countries have caroling also. I will give them a French carol to put in their song book (we add to the song book as we go).
- Lots of decorations with meaning – mistletoe = good luck, holiday candles= hope.
- Yule log – French custom that is hundreds of years old. It is a huge piece of an old tree trunk that is lit on Christmas Eve. Each holiday, an unburned piece of wood is saved to light the next year's Yule log. As heating systems replaced the fireplaces, Yule logs were no longer burned, but the French could not part with this age-old tradition. The traditional Yule log has been

replaced by a Christmas cake shaped like a Yule log, served at the end of the holiday feast. **ACTIVITY:** Purchase sponge cakes, 1 for each student, canned frosting, plastic knives and small Christmas candies. Students frost and decorate their own Yule Log.

- Christmas tree custom borrowed from Germany in the late 1800's. Usually the tree is planted in a tub before bringing it into the house.
- Pere Noel – the French gift giver, looks a lot like Santa. Red suited and bearded, however, he is tall and thin, wears wooden shoes and often brings a donkey with him to help carry gift bag.

7. Instead of “Ho, Ho, Ho”, he calls out “Tra la la, tra la la, bouli, bouli, boulah!” Shoes are left by the fire to be filled by Pere Noel. Birch sticks are sometimes left as a reminder to be good.
8. I give students a picture of him in their French packet.
9. At the end of each country study, I give each student a sticker flag of that country to put in their imitation passport.
10. Next I do Christmas in Holland (Netherlands). Dec. 6th is Sinterkllass Day there. I will send info on that country as soon as I can. I do basically the same stuff for each country. I have a packet with written information, pictures and puzzles that contains the following information for each country:
 - gifts
 - who is the gift bearer
 - how does he deliver the gifts
 - nativity
 - Christmas trees
 - vocabulary word search and cross word puzzles
 - color sheets that show gift giver, etc.
 - special foods
 - any other special customs I can find. Every country has different activities, including

writing poetry, letters and stories.

11. At the end of all the countries, the research teams present their information on the American customs. We go caroling and return to the classroom to have hot "wassail", without any alcohol, and sugar cookies. I usually give each student a small Christmas gift bag.

This information has come from many sources, including people I've talked to. I don't know if any of it's copyrighted or not. But, I'm happy to share!

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THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS IN (YOUR STATE)

GRADES: 3-12

Every year I have my student rewrite the Night Before Christmas in the style of our state (Louisiana). I generally start out by reading the story. I use the "Cajun Night Before Christmas" to set the mood. I then have the rewrite it using as many of the state symbols as possible in the story.

MATERIALS:

- the book "Night Before Christmas"
- a ditto printout of the story "Night Before Christmas"
- a ditto list all the state symbols: bird, flower, song, stone, drink, colors, etc.

- blank ditto paper

METHOD:

1. Read the story of the Night Before Christmas.
2. After reading, hand out the ditto of the story and tell the students that they are going to rewrite the story but set in your state. (They will complain sure, but once they hear the next details they generally like the idea.)
3. Hand out a list of all the state's symbols. You can find this list in a state almanac, state website, or state history textbook. Be sure to get the most complete list you can.
4. Tell them that they must use all the symbols in the story. They can substitute any of the characters or scenes with one from the list or your state. (In Louisiana the setting generally becomes the bayou or swamp due to lots of our symbols being water related – crawfish, alligators, bald cypress trees, etc.)
5. Have them write a rough draft. Highlight or underline all the symbols. Check to see if they have them all. Now write a final draft neatly in ink.
6. Hand out blank ditto paper and have them illustrate a cover for their story.
7. Type stories if possible. Copy some of the best and create covers then send to elementary classrooms or hospitals for other children to read.
8. Another idea is to copy all stories and have them bound or stapled and give each student a complete set. They love to see their work in print.
9. If you have a school newspaper see if they will print a few.
10. Have the student choose their favorite and submit to the local newspaper for possible publication.

Submitted by,

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

GRADES: K-3

In this lesson the learner elaborates on birthday celebrations of own families and the global family.

MATERIALS:

- plain, multi-colored paper
- chart paper
- crayons
- scissors
- glue
- fabric and paper scraps
- picture of cakes, candles, presents
- printed hand outs
- party food
- party hats
- Optional: Computer, Internet service

METHOD:

1. Select a day when a child in class is celebrating a birthday to introduce the lesson. Background: "Today is Niyats birthday. Families believe that a person's birthday is very important and very special. Families have celebrated birthdays for hundreds of years." Teacher asks Niyat how her birthday is to be celebrated

and how it was celebrated in her birth country of Ethiopia.

2. Class then discusses the similarities and differences between the two types of celebrations.
3. Teacher writes the similarities and differences on the chart paper.
4. Select a similarity- cake, candles, birthday cards, presents and discuss. For instance: Birthday Symbols: * Cake- for example the tradition started in Germany * Candles- used to symbolize "Light of Life" * Birthday cards- sent by people who couldn't be present on birthday * Present- given to show that birthdays and the person is special.
5. Hand out to each child a calendar on which to mark their birth date (teacher will have to assist as grade one children often do not know the actual date of their birthday).
6. Each child will make a birthday cake out of or on paper. Teacher may provide print-outs of birthday cakes for children to color.
7. Make candles out of paper to go on birthday cake.
8. Sing "Happy Birthday" to the birthday child.
9. Class to go to computer room where teacher goes into Internet to receive the electronic musical birthday card she has e-mailed to the child.
10. Teacher to store the paper cakes, each time a birthday occurs select one to give to the birthday child.
11. Following day: Continue discussion of symbols, and how people in other countries celebrate birthdays. Teacher's knowledge of children's ethnic backgrounds may be used to determine which countries will be discussed.
12. Children will share a birthday tradition from their families.
13. Send home hand out asking parents to explain the traditions of their families.
14. Make birthday books.
15. Read stories, teach songs, and poems.

16. As a Closing Activity: Have birthday party for class. Arrange to have families provide an ethnic dish. Send party invitations to parents (don't forget the principal). Play games, sing songs, have fun.

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FAMILY COAT OF ARMS AND MOTTO

GRADES: 5-12

MATERIALS:

- examples of family coats of arms and mottos
- writing materials

METHOD:

1. Explain that in medieval Europe the tradition of clan emblem (coat of arms) and motto (credo) was born and widely spread in the upper society class. Later the tradition was saved but not spread wider. The reason of it, I think, is in the fact that owning emblem and motto is not only a right, the matter of honor but also a hard duty. Declared motto becomes the rule, which the owner is to obey strictly.
2. Family emblem and motto is an idea, which can play a role of serious uniting and educational element for students' group. If your students are ready to accept the idea, to work without making a joke on it: Give them

several examples of outstanding families' emblems and mottoes.

3. Invite them to discuss what formal peculiarities are there in the mottoes introduced by you (brevity, clearness and deep content).
4. Discuss what words could be their own mottoes.
5. Ask them not to be in a hurry and advise to think on the problem at home, with their parents.
6. Remind that motto is the matter of honor, the public announcement of family intentions, the responsibility that a man puts (loads) on his own shoulders voluntarily.
7. Ask several volunteers to be ready for the next lesson presentation of their family or personal mottoes.
8. Advise them to prepare their personal A3 (at least A4) format cards with their credos, and emblems as a desirable item of the cards.
9. Having the results of their work presented at the next lesson make the assignment to another students' micro-group.
10. Making presented mottoes and emblems into the belongings of the whole class commonwealth you could:
11. Ask the owners of already introduced mottoes to lift their personal cards over heads, when you call their names, for all their classmates could see and read them in chorus after your signal.
12. Start your lesson or the motto activating fragment approximately so, "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It's a great honor to meet (teach) such a community (public). It's great to see you, Sir (name a student) : (the named student lifts his personal card).
13. Insist on good choir reading of the words on his personal card by the whole class.
14. Move to the next student.
15. The logical continuation of the motto idea promotion could be the competition among the micro-groups on their ability to recall the classmates mottoes without the

help of their personal cards.*Submitted by,*
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COLONIAL SALES BROCHURE

GRADES: 8-12

Students will research one of the original 13 colonies and create a sales brochure and “sales pitch” to encourage people to come and settle in their colony.

MATERIALS:

- white drawing paper to use for the sales brochure
- colored pencils and markers
- Internet access
- encyclopedias
- books dealing with the original 13 colonies

METHOD:

1. Students will work in groups of 2-4 (depending on the size of your class) to create a sales brochure and “sales pitch” to encourage people to come and settle in their colony. Students need to emphasize the good points of the colony (natural resources, climate, religious freedom, etc.) and downplay the bad points. I encourage students not to use “negative campaigning” techniques (i.e., “Come to Connecticut. We’re not Massachusetts where witches are put to death.”) One important thing is that the students deal only with colonial times. (Often they get excited if they select New York and then feel

dejected when they find out we're dealing with 17th and 18th century New York, not 21st century New York.)

2. The drawing paper is folded into thirds to make a brochure.
3. Students must include a hand-drawn map of their colony on the front of their colonial brochure as well as a catchy slogan, trying to get the attention of prospective settlers.
4. On the left-hand side of the inside of the brochure, they need to draw another map showing the physical features (i.e., mountains, rivers, lakes, etc.) of the colony.
5. In the center of the inside of the brochure, the slogan is to be repeated along with three points to support the slogan. This makes sure that the slogan actually relates to the colony and is based in fact.
6. On the right-hand side of the inside of the brochure, a minimum of 10 facts about the colony must be stated. Included in the facts should be who founded the colony, when it was founded, why it was founded, what kind of economy the colony has, and what kinds of people and religions are found there.
7. On the back of the brochure, each group must come up with a logo to represent the colony.
8. Students may choose to handwrite the brochure (blue or black ink only), or a computer can be used to print out the material. If it is printed, an old-fashioned font must be used. No computer artwork may be used; all graphics must be original.
9. I would plan on allowing the students two days in the Media Center to do their research and then three or four days in class to actually put the brochure together and prepare the sales pitch.
10. Each group should select one person to be the spokesperson for the group; however, all group members should be prepared to field questions from the class after the presentation is made.

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AN EASY SOCIAL ACTION PROJECT

GRADES: K-12

Unfortunately, too often the only social action that we do in schools happens at Thanksgiving and Christmas—and little during the rest of the year. From time to time, we'll be offering some ideas that your class or school may be interested in trying.

There's an organization called New Eyes for the Needy. You can mail them your old eyeglasses and they'll recycle them by giving them to poor people who can't afford glasses. They accept glasses, eyeglass frames, and sunglasses. If they are broken they'll use the parts.

Glasses can be mailed to:

New Eyes for the Needy
549 Milburn Avenue
Shorthill, NJ 07078

Send your old specs their way and give the gift of clear vision that should be available to everyone regardless of how little money they have!

If you are looking for social action projects in your area, go to the EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES link on the THT main page, and try the VOLUNTEER MATCH link. By typing in your zip code, and selecting the type of social action you want to try, the site will give you a list of opportunities in your area, along with

all important information and contacts.

THE DAY THE SLAVES WERE FREED

GRADES: 3-6

This lessons includes a brief overview of slavery, an introduction to the Juneteenth/Emancipation holiday and an exercise that helps students explore the meaning of freedom. Although it was designed for the Juneteenth/Emancipation holiday, it can be used throughout the year whenever slavery is included in the curriculum.

MATERIALS:

- Paper & pencil
- Picture book(s) set in slavery times or focusing on the Juneteenth holiday

METHOD:

1. Use this overview to explain the institution of slavery. "Slavery is a practice in which human beings are owned by other human beings. A slave is forced to work for his master or owner without pay. Slavery has existed for thousands of years in different parts of the world. The first African slaves arrived in the United States in 1619. By 1860, there were nearly 4 million slaves in the United States. African-American slaves had a hard life. As property, slaves had no rights. When slave traders or masters sold them, they were often separated from their families forever. On plantations, slaves were forced to work long hours at tasks chosen by their masters. They received neither pay nor vacations. Many masters forbid slaves from worshipping, legally marrying or learning to read and write. Slave children sometimes began working at as early as age four. Slaves could not refuse to do

tasks they thought were dangerous. Slaves of all ages could be severely punished for disobeying their masters. Some slaves protested the unfair treatment by working slowly, pretending to be sick, attacking their masters or trying to escape. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation ordered that all slaves in Confederate states be set free. Texas slaves, however, did not find out they were free until June 19, 1865 ÷ Juneteenth. Later that year, the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution freed all slaves in other parts of the country. Juneteenth, the first African-American holiday, is now a legal holiday in Texas.

2. Use these questions for discussion: What is a slave? At what age did some slaves begin to work? Could slaves legally marry, worship or learn to read and write? What could a master do if a slave disobeyed? How did slaves protest unfair treatment?
3. Offer a definition of "freedom." What is freedom? Freedom is the state of being in liberty rather than confinement; the power to determine your own actions; the right to enjoy all the privileges of citizenship.
4. Cite some American rights and freedoms. Americans enjoy many rights, including: voting (a right once denied blacks and women); gathering and publishing information or opinions; speaking and writing without fear of punishment; believing and worshiping as we choose; using public facilities and transportation; and free public education.
5. Explain that some freedoms have nothing to do with the government or laws. Experiences, such as running, swimming and cycling, can make us feel free, too. Above all, freedom is a feeling.
6. Student Activity: What makes you feel free? Ask students to write a paragraph or poem, and/or draw a picture expressing what freedom means to them.
7. Supplemental reading: "Juneteenth Jamboree" (Lee & Low Books) written by Carole Weatherford and illustrated by

Yvonne Buchanan. This picture book brings to life the first African-American holiday. Through the joyous traditions of Juneteenth, the holiday marking the freeing of the last slaves in the U.S., a young girl experiences a celebration of freedom and homecoming.

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CREATE A CIVILIZATION

GRADES: 5-10

MATERIALS:

- large white construction paper or poster board
- markers or crayons
- pencils

METHOD:

1. Students work in cooperative groups of 3 to 5 and are given the scenario: shipwrecked on an island, have nothing but the clothes on their backs.
2. They must create a functional civilization containing a caste system, system of government with laws, system of money, a work force, and a town/city with agriculture and business.
3. Students are divided into groups (teacher may want to level the groups or create mixed level groups)
4. Students develop a poster of their island, daily adding

new elements to their new civilization.

5. Decisions are made in the group by voting. Each member is given a particular job on the island and they must decide on each of the elements needed in their society as a group.
6. Laws are listed on the back, as well as job assignments for each individual, caste system, system of money.
7. The front of the poster will eventually show the daily life of the new civilization, showing in detail: pictures of the city, agriculture, water and food sources, and the members of society at work.

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THE DAY I WAS BORN ONLINE PROJECT

GRADES: 3-12

Students use the Internet to find and share important and interesting information about what was going on in the world the day they were born.

MATERIALS:

- Internet access

METHOD:

1. This cross-curricular project/website guides students to

a variety of links (with concise instructions on what to do once the links are accessed) to research historical as well as interesting information concerning their date of birth.

2. Classroom site:
<http://schools.bigchalk.com/members/technologycoordinators/campanella>
3. Students record, organize, and then report their findings. Collaboration is encouraged.

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COMMUNITY BUILDING IN YOUR CLASSROOM: JIGSAW PARTNERS

GRADES: 4-8

This is one way of mixing up your new class on the 1st day of term and getting them to meet each other.

MATERIALS:

- construction paper
- marker

METHOD:

1. Make up some cards (Approx 3inches x 8inches / 8cm x

20cm) with WELCOME printed on them in marker.

2. Draw a line, dividing each piece into 2, using a different pattern for each line.
3. Laminate them if you want to reuse them.
4. Cut each card into 2 pieces along the line, making 2 jigsaw pieces.
5. Shuffle the pieces.
6. As you greet each student in the schoolyard, or in the line-up, hand out the shuffled pieces, explaining only that the students should keep them flat & not swap with anyone.
7. As the students hang up their bags, tell them to go into the classroom and find their matching jigsaw piece, completing the word "Welcome", and to sit either beside or opposite their jigsaw partner.
8. Finding their partner encourages everyone (including new or shy students) to mingle & hopefully splits up groups that might exclude new students.
9. Tell the class that they will sit in these places until you decide to change them.
10. Collect jigsaws for reuse.

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COMMUNITY BUILDING IN YOUR CLASSROOM: SECRET ITEM

GRADES: 3-8

This activity allows everyone in the class find out more about each other, and you to discover things about your students that you may not otherwise know. It takes quite a bit of class time, but if you spread it out over the 1st two weeks, doing a few students a day, it can be done. The activity has the added benefit of aiding reading/language skills by developing deductive reasoning and inferencing skills.

MATERIALS:

- large brown lunch bags 1 per student and one for you.

METHOD:

1. This activity works best if you can arrange your class in a circle. Once you get into a circle the 1st time, it becomes a quick & easy thing to do and is a handy process to teach the kids for any future class discussion.
2. Start off by opening a brown lunch bag, into which you have placed an item that “says” something about you; something that is not really obvious. Don’t tell the class that it belongs to you.
3. If necessary, describe the item. Then ask the class what this item “says” about the person who owns it; what personal qualities the item infers. For example, if it is delicate and well cared for, the person obviously takes care of things, & is responsible enough to be allowed to bring it to school, likes doing whatever the item represents etc. you are looking for personal attributes & character traits.
4. Tell the class that the item belongs to someone in the room & ask if they would like to guess to whom the item belongs. Take 3 guesses & then come clean, giving a short explanation of why you chose this item.
5. Explain to the class that they are to bring in to school

something that really says something about them, something that is important to them. (I have had anything from something “my Grandma gave me” to a universal joint from a large car engine!!!) The item should “say” something about them that the class would otherwise probably not know.

6. The item should not be valuable (I.e. no gold jewelry etc.), and they must have their parent’s permission to bring it to school.
7. The item could be something that a relative gave them, something they made, or something they have collected or earned.
8. Above all, they MUST NOT tell anyone NOT EVEN THEIR CLOSEST FRIEND in the class – what they are bringing.
9. All secret items are to be placed in the brown bag if at all possible, and their name written INSIDE the bag, and brought to school A.S.A.P.
10. Instruct students to make sure they are discreet when they bring their item to you and store them safely in a large bin. (I try to put the bin in a safe place at night, just in case, or if a student does bring something really special (worth stealing!), with permission, I lock that particular bag in my cupboard each night, until it is pulled from the bin.)
11. When quite a few bags have accumulated, get into circle mode & pick a bag from the bin, repeating the process that was followed with your item.
12. Allow students to speculate and infer personal attributes from the item. Don’t let them get away with “They like soccer” if it is a soccer trophy, as this is too obvious. They should say what type of person might have a soccer trophy. I.e. probably fit/athletic, responsible/reliable turned up for practices, did not let team down etc.
13. After guesses, allow student to explain item & say a little about him or herself. Having something as a “prop” gives even the shyest student the courage to

participate and the new students an “in” to the class.

14. If you keep the sessions to about half an hour, the students do not have a chance to get bored and do improve in their deductive reasoning and inferencing skills.
15. The student whose item was picked gets to pick the next bag from the bin.

submitted by

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