

LESSON PLAN: Food and Culture: Links to West Africa

Sixth grade

STATE LEARNING STANDARDS

New York State Social Studies:

- Standard 1: History of the United States
- Standard 2: World history
- Standard 3: Geography

NCSS standards:

- 1.1: Culture
- 1.3: People, places, and environment
 - Challenge learners to examine, interpret, and analyze the interactions of human beings on their physical environment.
 - Analyze social and economic effects of environmental changes
- 1.5 : Individuals, Groups, and institutions
- 1.7: Production, Distribution, and Consumption
- 1.9: Global Connections

OBJECTIVE: Students will gain an understanding of the cultural importance of food in world cultures and attach a personal/ family identity to the food/ dish chosen to study. Specifically students will develop an understanding of West African geography and culture and how West African slaves influenced regional cooking in the United States. Students will:

- Learn about West African culture and their identity through food.
- Students will start to understand elements of the African Diaspora by identifying foods dispersed from West Africa into the United States by African slaves.
- Use a range of research and presentation skills.

RESOURCES:

- World map/ push pins.
- Student worksheet.
- Student reading handout.
- Video
- Research materials:
 - Web pages: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cuisines this page links to just about any regional cuisine.
 - <http://www.foodtimeline.org/> descriptions and a timeline for many foods with links to articles on the origin, domestication, and cultural importance.
 - <http://www.cambridge.org/us/books/kiple/rice.htm> The Cambridge World History of Food. Only a limited portion of this book is available online as a free source. This link does connect to the article on rice which is available on line.
 - http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/history/hs_es_cuisine.htm In depth essay on African crops and slave diets, intended reading material for grades 9-12. Can be used as either background information or adapted to a lower reading level.
 - History of Soul Food <http://www.jimworks.com/Trinas/history.htm>. This site is a good source for a descriptive history of soul food in relation to African history in the United States. Simply written, but contains no bibliography or list of resources, and the links lead to information about "Trina's Soul Food Café" but it offers a good synopsis for students and could be used as a jumping off point for further study.

TEACHING PROCEDURES:

1. Start a discussion on food by asking students what role food plays in their lives. Examples students might give are: providing nourishment, defining religious celebrations, socializing, gender role differences, comfort, and personal or cultural identity. Discuss the responses and explain how many types of foods are associated with celebrations, traditions, ethnic groups, and even rules of when and how people can eat certain foods. Give examples and ask for examples of each, such as; Turkey

- with Thanksgiving (tradition), birthday cake (celebration), Jewish dietary laws (rules), and any regional cuisine can be an example of ethnic groups. Write down the examples.
2. Watch the brief segment on Ghana and ask students to point out differences and similarities in the foods eaten and the methods used to cook the food. Have a discussion about their willingness to try the foods shown in the film clip.
 3. As a class read and discuss the handouts provided with this lesson.
 4. After reading the handouts, have a discussion on how modern technology has changed the way people eat. Discuss methods of transportation, improved shipping, production, preservation, and storage. Within this context start a discussion speculating where certain foods originated from.
 5. Separate the class into groups and have each group come up with brief descriptions of what their favorite foods are and how different they feel this is from each other (or the mainstream), and how these foods might reflect their culture. Write the responses on the board.
 6. If choosing to teach this segment, this would be an appropriate time to introduce the word "Diaspora" by writing the following definition on the board and discuss the words meaning.
 - a. Diaspora (noun): Scattering of language, culture, or people. A dispersion of a people, language, or culture that was formerly concentrated in one place.
Example- the African Diaspora.
 7. Hand out the student worksheets and have students complete the assignment as homework or in class. Students can work in groups or individually.
 8. Have students present their completed research. Use push pins and the large world map to identify what culture or geographic area the foods originated from. Find connections to other countries and specifically to West Africa.

LESSON EXTENTION: Students and their families prepare the dish and bring it in for taste testing.

ASSESSMENT: Students will be assessed using teacher observation and the completed student handout