

GED Lesson Plan
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Activity Title: Cultural Interdependence

Objective: Know that all cultures are interdependent. This activity involves one of the five themes of geography - that of movement.

Lesson Outline

Introduction: Students will be able to demonstrate how people of the world are linked by trade and transportation and how the United States is interdependent with other countries.

Activity: As an introduction to this lesson the students will find 10 household items in their homes which are made outside of the United States. They will list them and where they are from. Then in class we will talk about how dependent we have become for foreign made goods and how our standard of life would be different if we did not have many of these items available to us. A class demonstration using the Global Pencil assignment where the teacher will plot on a world map the country/area and resource from that area that contribute to the making of a common pencil will be completed. The students will do the same on their own world maps.

Real-Life Connection: The real-life connection is the activity where the students find the household items in their homes. Another activity could be for the students to go to a department store or grocery store and find items there made out of the country.

Materials/ Texts/ Handouts:

1. Paper and pencil to do the Real-life Connection assignment
2. Handout of *Global Pencil*
3. Two world maps - one to do the Global Pencil activity and one to do the debriefing activity.

Extension Activity: Students research through printed materials or over the Internet the amount of foreign trade the United States has with major world powers. Find out which countries America imports the most goods from and which countries we export the most goods to. Have students do an essay on their opinions if it is a healthy balance of trade. Encourage them to write to their U.S. Congressman or Senator and express their views.

Activity Title: Cultural Interdependence

Introduction to the Global Pencil activity:

Say: During the past few decades, the economies of the United States and other countries have become increasingly interdependent. United States' industries use many more natural resources than are available in the country. So the U.S. must import these resources from other countries and these countries in return get the needed surplus food and manufactured goods from America. An example of this is the interdependence of America and Saudi Arabia. America produces a surplus of food but not enough oil to meet its large energy needs. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia produces much more oil than it uses but can not produce enough food to feed its people. By exchanging part of their surplus productions these countries can satisfy more of their own needs.

As a class we are going to do an activity about this interdependence called the Global Pencil. Before we begin to plot the country/area on the map, I want you to write down on the back of your world map what resources you think make a up a common pencil and if you know where that resource comes from. We will list these on the board when you are done.

Main Activity: The Global Pencil

It takes the efforts of thousands of people from as many as twenty different countries and states just to make one pencil. You can imagine how many people it must take to make something like a car or stereo.

Much of the cedar wood to make the pencils come from trees in Oregon. The chain saw that cuts the trees may have been made in Japan. The gasoline to run the saw started out as crude oil. Perhaps the oil was from Texas but probably it came from several places such as Mexico, Alaska, Saudi Arabia or the North Sea off the coast of the United Kingdom.

The logs are loaded onto a truck. The truck may be been made in Michigan. However, it could have been put together in a plant just across the border from the United States in Canada. And, of course, the trucks run on fuel made from crude oil.

The logs are taken to a sawmill in California. The logs are sawed into small pieces before being sent to a factory in Pennsylvania. There the other parts that make up a pencil are added.

The "lead" in pencils is not really lead at all. Pencil lead is a mixture of several things. Graphite comes from mines in Sri Lanka. It takes the work of miners and dock workers in Sri Lanka to put the graphite on a ship built in Japan. The ship owner lives in France. The shipping company that operates the ship does business from Liberia. The graphite is mixed with clay from Mississippi and wax from Mexico.

For many people the most useful part of a pencil is the eraser. The rubber in the eraser likely came from Malaysia. The gritty stuff in the eraser that wears the pencil marks off the paper is pumice. Pumice comes from volcanoes in Italy. The piece of metal that holds the eraser in place is made of brass. Brass is made of zinc and copper. Zinc comes mainly from the United States, Canada, Australia, Russia, and Ireland. The copper may have come from Bolivia, Chile, or Zambia.

The pencil is almost finished. But first it must be painted. One of the main things that goes into the paint is castor oil. Farmers in Africa grow the castor bean plants. After

the pencil is painted, the name of the maker is stamped on it. The black paint has carbon black from the far north of Texas in it.

Now the pencil is finished. But it must still be sent to you. Hundreds of other people are involved in shipping and selling the pencil after it leaves the factory. People in any one of the fifty states could have played a part in bringing you the pencil you use every day.

(This activity is taken from *Building Skills in Geography*, 1990, Glencoe)

Closure/Conclusion: Compare the list of resources that were put on the board previous to the activity to the actual ingredients of the pencil. Was the first list fairly complete? What was left off the list? Are the students surprised at how many nations contribute to the making of the pencil? Ask the students if they can make some generalizations concerning which part of the world the U.S. depends on more for the making of a pencil.

Follow-up Lessons/ Activities: As a follow-up assignment each student will pick an item to do this same thing for. An item they might choose could be the ingredients of a candy bar, a cardboard box, a crayon, a light bulb, a piece of fabric, a mirror, etc. They will do the same on a clean world map that they did on the world map during the Global Pencil activity by plotting on the map the country and resource which went into the item.