

Subject Area: World Cultures/Geography
Grade Level: Middle School

Where in the World?

Purpose/Rationale

This assessment task is designed to measure students' understanding of key cultural elements of countries/regions around the world.

Knowledge, Skill, and Disposition Objectives

Students will demonstrate their ability to:

- choose cultural regions or countries that emulate specific characteristics.
- engage in a logical process of research, analysis, and questioning that leads them to valid, thorough information about a concept or idea.
- choose the most relevant information about a region to communicate a big idea or theme to a specific audience.
- visually present information about cultural regions in a manner that is appealing to a specific audience.

Prerequisite Knowledge/Skills

- knowledge of various cultures around the world
- knowledge of culture—the elements of culture as well as how those elements work together to form a community
- principles of effective visual communication
- research skills

Context

This task is designed to cover a 2-week period in which students work on the project in class and in the library for one hour per day. Students may also take the project home to work on it.

Form

The task is designed to be completed individually.

Rater

This task is designed to be rated by the teacher.

Prompts

There are two prompts. The first prompt is designed for those learners who are functioning at grade level in terms of their knowledge of world cultures, research ability, and complex and abstract thinking ability. This prompt may be modified for struggling learners by

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providing graphic organizers and multiple teacher checks to aid students in the research process and keep them on-task. The second prompt is designed for learners functioning above grade level in terms of their knowledge of world cultures, research ability, and complex and abstract thinking ability. It requires more transformational thinking and involves abstract ideas and a complex research and selection process.

Because of the significant amount of reading/research/written expression required, LEP students may need to work with a partner or receive additional help from a teacher to complete this task.

Rubric

The same rubric may be used for both prompts.

Teacher Notes

The teacher may wish to consider allowing ESL (English as a Second Language) students or recent immigrants the option of using their country of origin as the basis for comparison instead of the United States.

Prompt One



Where in the World?

You are a local travel agent. Lately, overseas travel has been a little slow. Your boss believes that by developing pamphlets, flyers, and displays about overseas countries, you will be able to encourage more people to travel overseas.

You have been put in charge of this marketing campaign. From your experience dealing with the traveling public, you have found that some people feel more comfortable traveling to countries that are culturally similar to the United States, whereas other, more adventurous types prefer to travel to places where they can feel far away from home.

Your job is to find a way to market travel to both types of people. Your specific duties are listed below:

- 1) The following is a list of some of the elements of culture that make up any community or population:
 - Arts and Literature
 - Economy and Technology
 - Social Structure, Education, and Language
 - Customs, Traditions, and Roles
 - Religion, Philosophy, and Value Systems
 - Government and Political Systems

Now, take a look at the United States. To establish a basis for comparison with other countries, describe our country using the above list. Answering the following questions may be helpful.

- What types of art or art movements have influenced life in the United States?
- Are there classic American stories or novels? If so, name several.
- What things about the American way of life do Americans seem to value most?
- What kind of technology is available and common in American society?
- What role does gender play in American society?
- What are American schools like?
- What types of food are eaten in the United States?
- What is the national language of the United States? What other languages are gaining importance within American society?

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- What are common leisure activities?
- How do people in the United States dress?
- What are the predominant religious groups in America? How do they influence American life?
- What holidays are celebrated in the United States?
- What type of government exist in the United States?

You should compile this information using several different sources such as: your textbook, encyclopedias, books on art, literature, newspapers, magazines, the Internet.

- 2) Using your notes on American culture, choose two countries outside of North America that you think are very similar to the United States. Remember that they don't have to be exactly the same, just similar enough so that a traveler would feel "at-home" when visiting the country.
- 3) Use the questions from step #1 to analyze the two countries that you have chosen. Note the main similarities and differences between these countries and the United States. (Remember that the two countries should be very similar to the United States!) You may wish to use the attached chart.
- 4) Now, choose two countries outside of North America that you believe are very different in terms of the elements listed in #1 when compared with the United States. In other words, where might a more daring person in search of a drastically different cultural experience want to travel? Analyze these countries using the questions listed in #1.
- 5) Describe the two countries that you have chosen. Note the main similarities and differences between these countries and the United States. (Remember that these countries should have many items listed under the "differences" column on the chart!) You may wish to use the attached chart.
- 6) Use the work you did in parts 1–5 to put together two displays or pamphlets—one to market travel to the far-away countries that would feel close to home and one to market travel to the far-away countries that would feel considerably different from home.

You will turn in your final product (part 6) as well as all supporting material. You will be evaluated on all parts of the task, however, your final product (part 6) is what will be presented to the public. It should be a synthesis of parts 1–5, not a replication, yet it should contain the most important and marketable ideas from parts 1–5.

You will be evaluated on the accuracy of the information you present, how thoroughly you cover important cultural elements of your regions, the appropriateness of your selections to the assignment, the attractiveness and appeal of your display, and the completeness of your supporting materials. Supporting materials that are illegible or unclear will not be accepted.

Cultural Similarities and Differences

	Similar to the United States	Different from the United States
Country #1 _____		
Country # 2 _____		

Where in the World? Scoring Rubric

<i>Travel Rubric</i>	Expert Travel Agent	Experienced Travel Agent	Novice Travel Agent
Accuracy of Information	The information you present about your countries is accurate and up-to-date.	Most of your information is accurate. Some of your facts are outdated.	You misquote or misinterpret some data. Some information is outdated or from an invalid source.
Thoroughness of Coverage	Your pamphlets or displays greatly inform your audience about the different areas of the world. You cover every element of culture to its fullest. You give your audience a thorough understanding of what they can expect when visiting in these countries.	You cover many of the elements of culture. Your audience gets a feel for the culture of the countries presented. However, you leave some issues unanswered, or answered in an incomplete or overly simplistic fashion.	You fail to research many of the elements of a culture. You leave out some crucial issues regarding your regions. The audience is unable to gain an understanding of the culture of the countries presented.
Validity of Choices	The countries that you highlight are very fitting to what was requested by the task.	You highlight some interesting countries; however, there are other countries that might better address the task at hand.	You highlight countries that do not meet the criteria established by the task.
Appeal of Display	Your brochures or displays are attractive and inviting. Customers will be intrigued by your design and will be drawn in to the ideas that you present. You use a combination of images and creative captions to capture the essence of the countries that you chose. Your display is neat and uncluttered. Your captions and supporting information about the regions contain no errors in grammar, spelling, composition, or punctuation.	Your brochures or displays are fun and informative. Customers learn something by examining them. However, there is a lack of originality or attention to sound aspects of design that would attract more customers. There are occasional errors in grammar, spelling, composition, or punctuation, which lessen the professional appeal of your brochure or display.	Your brochures or displays contain all or much of the information requested. In some places, they are too crowded with images and information OR there is so much white space that the display looks unfinished. Your display does not invite the customer to seek further information about the countries presented. Errors in grammar, spelling, composition, or punctuation distract the customer and interfere with your message.
Supporting Material	Your supporting information reflects the most recent information about cultural elements of the countries or regions. You use multiple sources for your information. Your notes are neat, clear, and easy to follow.	Your notes provide evidence of thorough background research and analysis. You use several sources of information. Your notes are sometimes unclear or difficult to follow due to messiness or a lack of order.	You provide very sketchy notes that are difficult to understand. The notes are unclear, disorganized, and contain many mistakes. It is unclear whether or not you did the background research required for this task.

Prompt Two



Where in the World?

You are a local travel agent. Your agency wants to market overseas travel to consumers by capitalizing on the new millennium. The theme of the marketing campaign focuses on “Cultural Centers of the 21st Century.”

Your boss has asked you to manage the campaign. Your job is to research and present to consumers cultural elements of three far-away places that you believe will serve as cultural hubs of the next century.

You may choose any three countries, geographic regions, or cultural regions overseas. You may not choose any North American country or region.

Remember that culture is an overarching term that refers to “socially transmitted behavior patterns of communities and populations.” There are many elements of culture which include:

- Arts and Literature
- Economy and Technology
- Social Structure, Education, and Language
- Customs, Traditions, and Roles
- Religion, Philosophy, and Value Systems
- Government and Political Systems

The steps of the task are outlined below.

- 1) In preparation for this task, you must first decide what a cultural center of the 21st Century would look like in regard to each of the elements listed above. What will make the region a popular travel destination? Why will people of the 21st century want to live or study or work there? Develop these criteria carefully, as you will use them to choose and evaluate your three regions. To help guide you in your evaluation, you may want to look at historical trends regarding the characteristics of current and past major cultural centers.
- 2) Use your criteria to choose three cultural regions or countries around the world that you believe best live up to the standards that you set in part 1.

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- 3) Describe your regions in detail, discussing each of the cultural elements listed above.
- 4) Defend your reasons for believing that the three regions will be cultural hubs of the next century.
- 5) Develop a visual display with supporting written information to market your three regions to the public as “Cultural Centers of the 21st Century.”

You will turn in your final product as well as all supporting material. You will be evaluated on all five parts, however, your final product (part 5) is what will be presented to the public. It should be a synthesis of parts 1–4.

You will be evaluated on your analysis of what comprises a cultural center, the accuracy of the information that you present, how thoroughly you cover all aspects of your regions, the quality of your defense of your choices, the completeness of your supporting materials, and the attractiveness and appeal of your display. Supporting materials that are illegible or unclear will not be accepted.

Where in the World? Scoring Rubric

<i>Travel Rubric</i>	Expert Travel Agent	Experienced Travel Agent	Novice Travel Agent
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