

Who's Buried Where - And Why?
Finding Cultural Universals with the Ancient Egyptians and Texas
Caddo Indians
By Carol Schlenk

Subjects: High School World History and World Geography Studies

Grade level: High School

Rationale or Purpose: This lesson illustrates that certain human values and practices do not change over time or with location.

Introduction: Cultural universals are the basic behaviors practiced by all cultures, regardless of location or era. Studying cultural universals helps us understand the customs of other societies both historically and in today's multicultural world. Humans burying and honoring their dead is one of these cultural universals. In this lesson, students will discover that burial practices of the Caddo Indians in east Texas around 1000 years ago and those of the ancient Egyptians over 4000 years ago, had a number of interesting differences and similarities.

Materials:

- Exterior Images of *Caddo Mound C Burial* and the *Great Pyramid of Giza*
- Interior Images of *Caddo Mound C Burial* and the *Great Pyramid of Giza*
- Lesson Vocabulary
- *Caddo Burial Notes* and *Egyptian Burial Notes* Graphic Organizers
- Teacher answer keys for *Caddo* and *Egyptian*
- *Who's Buried Where - And Why? Venn Diagram*
- Internet access for research
- Word processing software
- Computer printer or document-sharing application

Lesson Duration: Two 50 minute class periods or one block period

Objectives: Students will define cultural universals and work with a partner to conduct guided research on burial practices of the Caddo Indians in Texas and the ancient Egyptians. After collecting data on the two cultures, they will use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast burial practices of the two cultures and use their research data to write a comparison/contrast essay.

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS):

High School World History Studies

History

1A Identify major causes and describe the major effects of the development of the river valley civilizations.

2B Identify the characteristics of civilization.

Geography

16A locate places of historical significance directly related to major eras and turning points in world history.

16B Analyze the influence of human and physical geographic factors on major events in world history, including the development of river valley civilizations.

Culture

23B Identify examples of religious influence on various events referenced in the major eras of world history.

26B Analyze examples of how architecture reflects the history of the cultures in which they are produced.

Science, technology, and society

27A identify the origin and diffusion of major ideas in mathematics, science, and technology that occurred in river valley civilizations.

Social Studies Skills

29A Identify methods used by archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, and geographers to analyze evidence.

29F Analyze information by comparing and contrasting.

30D Transfer information from one medium to another.

High School World Geography Studies

Geography

5A Analyze how the character of a place is related to its political, economic, social, and cultural elements.

8A Compare ways that humans depend on, adapt to, and modify the physical environment, including the influences of culture and technology

Culture

16A Describe distinctive cultural patterns and landscapes associated with different places in Texas, the United States, and other regions of the world and how these patterns influenced the processes of innovation.

16B Describe elements of culture, including beliefs and customs, institutions, and technologies.

17A Describe and compare patterns of culture such as religion and customs that make specific regions of the world distinctive.

Social Studies Skills

21A Analyze and evaluate the validity and utility of multiple sources of geographic information such as primary and secondary sources.

23C Use problem-solving and decision-making processes to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.

Activity - Day 1

Step 1: Write the term **cultural universal** on the board or overhead and ask students if they can define it (to define this and other words in bold, see Lesson Vocabulary).

Guide them to the correct answer and write it on the board. All societies, everywhere, have some form of religion, government, marriage, etc, all of which are cultural universals. Have students brainstorm more examples. **Note:** See the following website for more on cultural universals:

<http://study.com/academy/lesson/cultural-universals-in-sociology-definition-examples-quiz.html>

Step 2: Point out that one important cultural universal is honoring and burying our dead. Have students brainstorm reasons why human burials are so universally practiced. Why is so much attention paid to dead bodies? Have students give examples of how different cultures treat their dead, e.g., cremation, burial at sea, placement on platform, etc.

Step 3: Ask students if a society's **elite** individuals are given more attention when they die than ordinary individuals. Have students brainstorm ways important individuals are honored in death, e.g., state funerals for presidents and royalty, elaborate grave markers such as statues for important people, etc. Explain that they will be examining the burials of important individuals from the Texas Caddo Indian **culture** and the ancient Egyptian **culture**.

Step 4: Display the exterior image of Caddo Indian Burial **Mound C** in east Texas, followed by the exterior image of the Great **Pyramid** of Giza in Egypt. Point out that these specific burial sites were built for important individuals in different areas of the world during very different time periods and there was no way these Texan Indians and ancient Egyptians could have communicated and shared information about burial practices with each other. Yet these burial sites exhibit some of the same characteristics. Display interior images of Caddo Mound C and the Pyramid of Giza. Explain that students will be researching both these burial sites to discover how they are alike, i.e., what makes them cultural universals, and how they are different. They will then write a comparison/contrast essay using their research data.

Step 5: Have students choose a partner. Distribute one copy of the *Caddo Burial Notes* Graphic Organizer and one copy of the *Egyptian Burial Notes* Graphic Organizer to each set of partners. Explain that partners can divide their research, each student filling in one set of notes, or both students working on each set of notes simultaneously. Point out that the *Caddo Burial Notes* Graphic Organizer offers the following pertinent websites:

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/tejas/ancestors/early.html>

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/tejas/fundamentals/graves.html>

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/caddo/mounds.html>

<http://www.visitcaddomounds.com/index.aspx?page=2>

The *Egyptian Burial Notes* Graphic Organizer requires more independent research.

Step 6: Have students begin researching and filling in their graphic organizers. **Note:** The teacher may use the *Burial Notes Answer Keys* to help guide students toward appropriate answers. Correct answers will vary slightly, as they will come from different historical sources.

NOTE: Neither the Caddo Indian Burial Mound C in east Texas, nor the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt contained many pottery grave goods, although we know such items have been found in other Caddo and Egyptian burials. Pothunters, also known as grave robbers, often take artifacts from archeological sites without permission.

Step 7: When students have completed their research notes, display a copy of the

Who's Buried Where - And Why? Venn Diagram on the board or overhead. Ask volunteers to offer one example of how the Caddo mound and the Egyptian pyramid are alike. Write that answer on the board and repeat process for an example of how the two are different.

Step 8: Give each student a copy of the *Who's Buried Where - And Why? Venn Diagram* (one per each student). Have them fill in the examples of same and different characteristics displayed on the board and then work with their partner to complete filling out their Venn diagrams, listing at least four examples of same characteristics and four examples of different characteristics. Partners should share information and each partner should have identical information on his/her completed diagram.

Activity - Day 2

Step 1: Re-display the definition of **cultural universal** on the board. Remind students that today they will be writing a comparison/contrast essay using the research data they gathered yesterday.

Step 2: Have students get with their partner and get out their completed Venn diagrams.

Step 3: Briefly go over the basics of writing a comparison/contrast essay. Helpful instruction is available at the following website:
<https://www.sbcc.edu/clrc/files/wl/downloads/WritingaCompareContrastEssay.pdf>

Step 4: Refer again to the definition of **cultural universal** on the board and instruct students to discuss in their essays how the term is relevant to the burial practices of the Caddo Indians and ancient Egyptians.

Step 5: Have students write their essays, utilizing the information on their Venn diagrams. Partners may work separately or together on their essays, but each individual student must turn in a separate essay.

Step 6: Have students print out their completed essays or post them on a document sharing website and turn them in for grading.

Closure: In today's world, we meet and interact with people from many different world cultures. Understanding **cultural universals** helps us identify with other cultures, both regarding their histories and current everyday lives. Investigating rituals and practices surrounding death reveals much about two different groups' culture, history, and spiritual beliefs.

Assessment: Comparison/Contrast essay

Modification for special learning needs:
Learning Disabled

- Decrease the number of questions in the graphic organizers to five (5).
- Supply pre-selected websites for Egyptian Pyramid research

Gifted and Talented

- Have students create a PowerPoint presentation on the 10 Cultural Universals, including burial rituals.

Extension Activity: Discuss with students how today's American burial rituals compare to those of the ancient Caddo Indians and Egyptians.

Related Websites:

Cultural Universals

<http://study.com/academy/lesson/cultural-universals-in-sociology-definition-examples-quiz.html>

Writing a Comparison/Contrast Essay

<https://www.sbccc.edu/clrc/files/wl/downloads/WritingaCompareContrastEssay.pdf>

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