

CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS



People all over the world develop complex ways to meet their needs, like preparing food or building a shelter. Eventually, people will pass these behaviors on to their children, becoming a culture. Culture is often referred to as a "blueprint for living" because it includes everything that contributes to a society's development. Culture includes a people's language, literature, music, art, customs and traditions.

Customs refers to the things that people do, such as how they dress, the foods they eat, and the holidays they celebrate. It is the commonly accepted way of behaving or doing something in a particular society or place. The regular, patterned way of exercising these behaviors will, over time, become a characteristic of a group's culture. Each culture, society and religion have their own customs. For example, in some countries bowing is a way of showing respect and gratitude. Customs help to maintain the harmony and unity within a group.



Traditions are the learned behaviors that people participate in to mark the milestones, or turning points, in their lives—birth, death, coming-of-age, marriage, parenthood, and death. While following traditions are not obligatory, many people follow traditions as it is the way of life that they have been taught from childhood. However, it is always

better to follow a tradition after knowing the origins and the reason behind that tradition. Since traditions are not strict rules and regulations, changing certain aspects of a tradition is possible; however, these changes come slowly, with changes from one generation to the next being seen as rare but significant.

Culture is everything that makes a group of people who they are and how they perceive people from other groups. For example, a person from a very traditional culture might have difficulty understanding a person from a more modern way of life. Sometimes, these differing cultural perceptions can lead to misunderstandings or even conflicts. However, education about different cultures helps the world's people understand each other better.

FOLK COSTUME

A folk costume is a traditional dress that expresses one's regional or cultural identity. They are usually associated with a geographic area or specific point in history. It can also indicate someone's religious background, marital status, or social class. Folk costumes are often divided into two categories: one for everyday use, and festive or formal wear.

SCOTLAND



Kilts are plaid skirts that are traditionally worn in Scotland by...men! The plaid pattern on a kilt belongs to specific family trees, or clans, in Scotland. Essentially, wearing a specific plaid patterns means you are identifying yourself as a member of that family. In the past, kilts used to be worn every day; in modern times, men have worn them specifically for formal occasions or when they participate in the Highland Games, an annual festival held in Scottish communities around the world.

JAPAN



Kimonos are formal silk robes worn by both men and women in Japan. Women's kimonos have many wrapped layers that are decorated and painted (often by hand); these layers will often mix and match in color. Men's kimonos are simpler in design, and are almost always in dark colors. Historically, men's kimonos were also layered with armor for the samurai to store their various weapons during battle. In modern Japan, most kimonos are worn by geisha (female entertainers and dancers) or by both genders on their wedding day.

SOUTH AFRICA



Married women of the Ndebele tribe wear neck rings as a symbol of their husband's wealth and social class. These rings, called *dzilla*, are made of copper, brass, or gold. They are presented as gifts to the wives from their husbands, so only married women are allowed to wear them. The more rings a woman has around her neck, the more wealth her husband is said to have.

CUISINE (FOOD)

Cuisine is a term that refers to the way a food is cooked and is associated with a specific culture or geographic area. Factors that affect a cuisine include religious food laws, ingredients that are locally available or available through trade, and the preparation techniques that are handed down through tradition.

SPAIN



Paella (pie-AY-ah), originated in Valencia, an eastern province on the Mediterranean Sea. Though there are numerous variations, paella is usually made of a variety of shellfish (such as shrimp, clams, crab, and lobster), chorizo (sausage), vegetables (tomatoes, peas, and asparagus), and long-grained amarillo (yellow) rice. Rice is grown in Valencia's tidal flatlands.

THAILAND



Pad Thai, Thailand's most famous dish, is made of rice noodles (a native product of SE Asian countries) that are stir fried with ingredients like tofu, peanuts, shrimp, green onions, bean sprouts, garlic, pepper, fish sauce and lime juice. A scrambled egg mixed into the noodles seals the dish together. Pad Thai is widely available, but is famously made by street vendors in Bangkok.

UNITED STATES



In the Southern United States, *collard greens* are a staple crop, which means that they grow in abundance and are relatively affordable. Collard greens are cooked in a broth seasoned with marrow from a bone. Traditionally, they are eaten on New Year's Eve in the South to ensure good luck in the coming year.

HOLIDAYS

A holiday is a day set aside by custom or by law on which normal activities, especially business or work, are suspended or reduced. Generally, holidays are intended to allow individuals to celebrate or commemorate an event or tradition of cultural or religious significance. The concept of many holidays often originated in connection with religious observances. Holidays may be designated by governments, religious institutions, or other groups or organizations.

EASTER (Christianity)



In Christianity, *Easter* is a holiday celebrating the Resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, on the third day after his crucifixion. The Easter holiday, for most Christians, follows a 40-day period of fasting, prayer, and penitence called Lent. Many Christians commemorate the holiday by cracking Easter eggs, which are supposed to represent Jesus' empty tomb. Other symbols associated with the holiday include the Easter lily and the Easter Bunny. In 2020, Easter Sunday will be April 12th.

PASSOVER (Judaism)



Jewish people celebrate *Passover* to commemorate their freedom from slavery and delivery out of Egypt. The book of Exodus in the Torah and in the Christian Old Testament details their experiences before Moses led them out of Egypt. This holiday lasts an entire week from sundown on Sunday to midnight on the following Monday (In 2020, this will be from April 8th to April 16th). During the week of Passover, most Jews refrain from going to work in order to participate in prayer services and special holiday meals.

RAMADAN (Islam)



In Islam, the first revelation of the Qu'ran that Mohammed experience is commemorated by the month-long holiday of *Ramadan*. During these 30 days, which in 2020 will be from April 23rd to May 23rd, all adult Muslims must participate in fasting from dawn to sunset and abstaining from bad behaviors in order to cleanse their soul and teach them to be more disciplined and have more self-control. Muslims are also encouraged to perform more acts of generosity and charity during this time.

MAPPING ACTIVITY

For this mapping activity, study the origins of each of the three above religions. Find the ORIGINAL location where the religion was founded BEFORE it spread. On your map, shade in each of these three locations with different colored pencils.

rites of passage

Rites of passage are the celebrations people experience when they complete a certain stage in life- these celebrations usually include births, coming-of-age, marriage, and death rituals. Generally, a rite of passage means that a person is leaving one stage of life and moving into another.

BIRTH

GERMANY



German government offices keep a list of "accepted names" that parents must adhere to when registering the name of their newborn baby. In the case of an unusual name, they must give a compelling reason why an exception should be made. The government policy is intended to act in the best interest of the child, in an effort to thwart potential ridicule of a child with a name that's too different.

BRAZIL



Pregnant women are treated like princesses -- for example, they are ushered to the front of any line so they don't have to wait. Once mother and baby leave the hospital, visitors flock to their home. They give a gift to the baby and receive one in return. Traditionally, it's something small, such as a bottle of perfume or candy, with a message from the baby attached thanking friends and family for the visit.

TURKEY



Unlike in the U.S., baby showers are not given in Turkey -- all celebration is postponed until after the baby is born. Mother and baby stay home for the first 20 days after the birth. Friends drop by and drink a special beverage called *lohusa serbeti*. After this period, the mother and child make return visits to gift-givers' homes, where they receive a handkerchief filled with a single egg (for a healthy baby) and candy (for a good-natured baby). They also rub flour on the baby's eyebrows and hairline, which is supposed to grant him a long life.

COMING-OF-AGE

BAR & BAT MITZVAH



Young Jewish children celebrate their *Bar* (boys) and *Bat* (girls) *Mitzvah* at age 13 in order to demonstrate their commitment to their faith and recognize that they are now responsible for following Jewish law. After the religious ceremony, a reception typically follows to celebrate the young person's hard work and accomplishment, as they have often spent weeks learning and preparing for this day.

RUMSPRINGA



In Amish tradition, *Rumspringa* marks the time when a youth turns 16 and they're finally able to enjoy unsupervised weekends away from family. The purpose of this period is to allow Amish youth the opportunity to see and experience the world beyond their culture and upbringing. In this way, returning to their community and way of life is entirely their choice. Those who return are then baptized and become

committed members of the Amish church and community, marking the end of *Rumspringa* (but they must do so before turning 26).

QUINCEANERA



In many parts of Central and South America, young girls celebrate their *Quinceanera* when they turn 15 years old. The coming of age tradition typically begins with a religious celebration where the girl renews her baptismal vows and solidifies her commitment to her family and faith. Immediately

following the mass is a fiesta where friends and family eat and dance.

MARRIAGE

CHINA



Historically, Chinese parents arranged their children's marriages, and it was common for the bride and groom to meet on their wedding day. Today, picking your spouse is more common, but parents still play a large role in bringing couples together. Parents arrange a formal meeting, called *Xiang Qin*, and visit with an astrologer to see when the best time for marriage would be. On the day of the wedding, the groom eats with the bride at her parents' house, then they go to the groom's house for the wedding. The

bride usually wears red, while the groom wears dark colors. They will burn incense and family members will give money in red envelopes.

ZULU TRIBE (AFRICA)



Traditional Zulu weddings are marked by vibrant colors and dance-offs between the bride and groom's families. Like many brides across the world, Zulu brides might start the day in a Western "white wedding" dress, but change into traditional tribal clothing after a church wedding. In a traditional ceremony, the groom's family slaughters a cow to welcome the bride. The bride places money inside the stomach of the cow to symbolize that she is now part of the family.

RUSSIA



Russian grooms have to work for their brides. Before the wedding, the groom shows up at the bride's home and asks for his beloved. In jest, her friends and family refuse him until he pays up in gifts, money, jewelry or simple humiliation. Grooms are forced to do silly dances, answer riddles, and perform goofy tests of worthiness like diapering a baby doll. Once the groom impresses friends and family with this bridal ransom, or "*vykup nevesty*," he's allowed to see his bride-to-be.

DEATH & MOURNING

THAILAND



In Thailand when someone dies, the family typically keeps the body at home for one week before the cremation. Families will bathe the deceased in a ritualistic ceremony. A sacred white string blessed by a Buddhist monk is tied to the deceased's wrists and ankles to provide good luck and protection. The deceased's hands are placed in a praying position with a lotus flower and incense sticks. Family members lead the procession to the crematory, followed by monks holding the white string, and walk counterclockwise around the temple three times. Everyone prays to prevent the deceased from becoming an evil spirit and to ask forgiveness for sins before the body is cremated, releasing the deceased's spirit to begin their next life.

AUSTRALIA



When a loved one dies in Aboriginal society in Australia's Northern Territory, elaborate rituals begin. First, a smoking ceremony is held in the loved one's living area to drive away their spirit. Next a feast is held, with mourners painted white as they partake in food and dance. The body is traditionally placed atop a platform and covered in leaves as it is left to decompose.

ISRAEL



Shiva is the week long period of mourning following a loved one's death. During this time, family members traditionally gather in one home to receive visitors. The word *shiva* means seven, signifying the seven day mourning period in which mourners are supposed to grieve for their loved ones or show support for the family. Covered mirrors symbolize the absence of vanity and self-indulgence in a place of grief, and sitting low to the ground symbolizes mourning in the Jewish tradition.