

## SECTION 2 REVIEW

- 1. Define:** (a) map projection, (b) topography, (c) vegetation, (d) mountain, (e) elevation, (f) hill, (g) plain, (h) plateau, (i) climate.
- 2.** Describe one advantage and one disadvantage of each of the following map projections: (a) Mercator, (b) interrupted, (c) Peters, (d) Robinson.
- 3.** List three kinds of information that a map might show.
- 4. Applying Information** How does climate affect the way people live?
- 5. Writing Across Cultures** Jot down five ways that the way of life in a warm climate might differ from that in a cold climate.

### 3

## THE MEANING OF CULTURE

### FIND OUT

What are the major elements of culture?

Why is the family the most important unit of social organization?

What kinds of governments and economies have societies developed?

**Vocabulary** culture, nuclear family, extended family, monotheism, polytheism, democracy, republic; dictatorship

“You don’t have to be afraid. Look at me when you speak, Eleanor,” the teacher urged.

Eleanor Wong looked up. She had arrived in New York from Hong Kong only a week earlier. Now, on her first day in an American school, her teacher seemed displeased.

Eleanor was confused. Didn’t the teacher know that it was disrespectful to look directly at a person in authority? Even Eleanor’s

father did not look his boss in the eye. Only later did Eleanor find out that Americans think it is rude not to look them in the eye when speaking.

Many misunderstandings between people around the world occur because we do not know enough about each other. As Eleanor Wong and the teacher found out, even the way we look at another person depends on where we grew up. To understand other people, we must understand their culture, that is, all the things that make up a people’s entire way of life. (See World Literature, “The All-American Slurp by Lensey Namioka,” page 50.)

## Elements of Culture

Everyone is born into a culture. We inherit our culture from parents and grandparents. In turn, we pass on our culture to our children. From birth, we are taught the ways of thinking, believing, and behaving that are accepted in our culture. Our culture shapes our lives.

Culture is made up of many different elements. It is reflected in what we eat, the clothes we wear, and the jokes we tell. Culture influences the buildings we live in, how we spend our free time, and the skills we learn. It also affects our ideas of what is beautiful or ugly, our beliefs about what is right and wrong, and our goals for the future.

In this book, you will read about cultures that have developed in different parts of the world. You will look at the many elements that make up those cultures. Among these are social organization, customs and traditions, language, arts and literature, and religion. Forms of government and economic systems are also key elements of culture.

## Social Organization

Every culture creates a social structure by organizing its members into smaller units. This social organization is meant to help the people of a culture work together to meet their basic needs.

**Family patterns.** In all cultures, the family is the most important unit of social organiza-

tion. Through the family, children learn how they are expected to behave and what they are expected to believe. Although all cultures are built around families, family patterns differ among cultures.

The nuclear family includes a wife, a husband, and their children. It has been the typical family pattern in industrial societies such as the United States. In these societies, a family usually does not need to be large to accomplish the tasks of living. Most Americans live in cities and work in business and industry. They buy what they need with money they earn. They have many machines, such as vacuum cleaners and washing machines, that make daily tasks easy.

Nuclear families, however, are not always small. Some nuclear families have many children.

The extended family has several generations living in one household. It may include grandparents, parents, children, and sometimes uncles, aunts, and cousins. This family pattern is common in many societies. In a farming culture, grandparents may look after the youngest children while older children and adults work the land. Although the family owns animals and tools and grows enough food to eat, it may not have much money. Family members may pool their savings to buy a tractor or send a child to school.

In cultures with extended families, respect for elders is strong. The elders pass on their wisdom to the young. Often, this family pattern is more common among those members of a community who have the wealth to keep the family together. In both nuclear and extended families, people place high value on family ties.

The person who exercises authority, or power, within a family also varies from one culture to another. For centuries, in most cultures, families were patriarchal. Men exercised more authority than women did. In traditional patriarchal families, the oldest man made the important decisions. In some African and Native American cultures, families are matriarchal. Women have greater authority than men and are the main decision makers.

Today, family patterns are changing around the world. Women in many cultures are taking jobs outside the home. As this occurs, men and women tend to share power more equally. The movement from farms to towns and cities is also affecting family patterns. The nuclear family is becoming more common in all cultures. However, traditional ties to the extended family remain strong.

**Social classes.** Most cultures have social classes that rank people in order of status. Social class may be based on money, occupation, education, ancestry, or any other factor that a culture values highly. In farming cultures, people who own much land or many animals have high status. In a culture where religion plays a key role in people's lives, religious leaders belong to the upper class.

In the past, a person was usually born into a class and stayed there for life. Today, people in most cultures enjoy at least some degree of social mobility. They have some chance of moving up the social ladder. Some ways of rising in society include obtaining a good education, earning more money, or marrying into a family from a higher class. Of course, people can also move down in society if they lose their money or other things their society values.

## Customs and Traditions

Among the most important elements of a culture are its rules of behavior. Some rules, such as what to wear or how to be polite, affect everyday life. Children learn to eat with a fork or with chopsticks, to sleep on a bed or in a hammock, to greet friends with a handshake or with a bow.

Cultural rules vary in importance, and different rules are enforced in different ways. Often, social pressure is used to enforce minor rules of daily behavior. If you show up at a formal school dance dressed in jeans and a T-shirt, your classmates will probably make fun of you. You will feel embarrassed, and the next time you may dress differently.

People enforce their ideas about right and wrong more strictly than minor rules of be-



**An Extended Family** People live in extended families for many reasons. Members of this family in Mongolia, in Asia, live and work together as herders. Extended families provide a means of caring for older family members and passing traditions on to the young. **Culture** Why do you think that extended families are less common in industrialized societies?

havior. Often, these ideas are part of a culture's written laws. In most cultures, these include laws against stealing and murder.

### Language

Language is the cornerstone of culture. Without it, people would not be able to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and knowledge. They could not pass on what they know or believe to new generations. All cultures have a language, although not all cultures have developed forms of writing.

Language reflects a culture's identity. People who speak the same language often share the same customs. The United States, for example, does not have an official language, but most Americans speak English.

Many societies, however, include large numbers of people who speak different languages. India, for example, has more than 700 languages. The Indian government has recognized 15 official languages. Canada has two official languages, French and English. The former Soviet Union, too, included speakers of many different languages.



**Elements of Culture** People's behavior reflects elements of their culture. Many American students express themselves as they wish and have a great deal of freedom to dress as they please. Students in some other cultures are more restricted. **Diversity** What differences can you point out between the school life of the American students and the students of Nepal shown here?

For many countries, language presents a thorny problem. National governments want to develop a unified culture. They choose one or two official languages for schools, government, and business. Many citizens feel loyal to their local languages, however. Giving up their language, they say, is the first step toward losing their culture.

### Arts and Literature

Products of the human imagination, such as art, music, and literature, please and entertain us. They also teach us about our culture's values.

Children around the world listen to folk tales that are traditional to their culture. Folk tales are handed down from generation to generation. They help to pass on a culture's

basic beliefs and values. American children hear the tale of "The Tortoise and the Hare." This story tells about how a slow but steady tortoise wins a race against a fast but lazy hare. It teaches the values of determination and hard work.

Art, music, and literature help to strengthen a culture's identity. They encourage people to feel proud of their customs and give them a sense of belonging. Today, many governments support the arts with public funds because the arts promote cultural pride and unity.

### Religion

The arts are often closely linked to people's religious beliefs. People created beautiful temples, churches, paintings, and music to

express their faith. Within a culture, people usually share religious beliefs. Religion helps people answer basic questions about the meaning and purpose of life. Like other elements of culture, it also supports the values that a group of people consider important.

Religious beliefs vary. The worship of one god is called monotheism. The worship of more than one god is called polytheism. Religious practices such as prayers and rituals also vary from one culture to another.

History has played a central role in shaping the religion of a society or region. Among the major world religions are Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Christianity, for example, began among a small group of people in the Middle East. Missionaries and conquering armies helped spread the religion around the world. Christianity absorbed ideas from other cultures and also helped to shape those cultures.

Religious differences are a troubling problem in many regions. Struggles over religion are not new. Today, there is fighting between

Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland and between Muslims and Christians in the Balkans. Religious differences are usually not the only cause of the fighting. Ethnic rivalries or the lack of political power or economic opportunity often fuel conflicts.

## Forms of Government

People form governments to provide for their common needs. These needs include keeping order within a society and protecting the society from outside threats. The term government is used in two ways. It refers to the person or people who hold power in a society. It also refers to the society's laws and political institutions.

**People organize governments.** Different people organize their governments in different ways. For much of human history, people lived in small groups. Government was fairly simple. Usually, a chief or council of elders made important decisions. Leaders based decisions on the culture's beliefs and customs.

**Monarchies** Great Britain is a monarchy and a democracy. Queen Elizabeth II, shown here, is a figurehead, and her role is largely ceremonial. The Cabinet and the people's elected representatives in Parliament hold the real power to govern Britain. **Political System** How does the British system of government allow for a democracy headed by a monarch?



As societies expanded, more complex forms of government developed. Today, very large numbers of people live together in nations. Each nation has its own government based on a written code of law. National governments include thousands of officials who collect taxes, enforce laws, and administer justice.

**Types of government today.** Nations have different types of government. Today, we often classify governments as democracies or dictatorships. In a democracy, the people have supreme power. The government can act only by and with their consent. In the form of a democracy called a republic, the people choose the leaders who represent them. The United States is an example of a democracy with a republican form of government.

In a dictatorship, a ruler or group holds power by force. Dictators usually rely on military support to stay in power. In many cases, dictatorships claim to be republics although the people have little or no power. In the 1980s and 1990s, a number of nations that were once ruled by dictators became more democratic.

## Economic Systems

Economics refers to how people use limited resources to satisfy their wants and needs. People as well as nations must answer three basic economic questions. What goods and services should we produce? How should we produce them? For whom should we produce them? Over the centuries, people have created various economic systems to answer these questions.

**Traditional economy.** In a traditional economy, people produce most of what they need to survive. Hunting and gathering, farming, and herding cattle are the bases of a traditional economy. People hunt for the food they eat or raise it themselves. Often they make their own clothing and tools. If they produce more food than they need, they trade the surplus, or extra food, for goods made by others. For thousands of years, most cultures had a traditional economy.

**Market economy.** In a market economy, individuals answer the basic economic questions

by buying and selling goods and services. Businesses and industries produce and sell goods for money. People earn the money to buy what they need or want by working for others or running their own businesses. Business people decide what to produce based on what they believe consumers will buy.

**Command economy.** In a command economy, the government controls what goods are produced, how they are produced, and what they cost. Individuals may produce goods and sell them to one another on a small scale. Individuals, however, have little economic power. Until the early 1990s, the communist countries of Eastern Europe had command economies. The governments owned the factories, land, and stores. They made the major economic decisions.

**Mixed economy.** Today, most nations have mixed economies. In a mixed economy, individuals make some economic decisions and the government makes others. The United States has a mixed economy. It has features of a market economy and a command economy. For example, American car makers decide what to produce and sell. However, the government says cars must meet certain standards for safety and fuel use. As you will learn, the amount of government control over the economy varies from country to country.

## SECTION 3 REVIEW

- 1. Define:** (a) culture, (b) nuclear family, (c) extended family, (d) monotheism, (e) polytheism, (f) democracy, (g) republic, (h) dictatorship.
- 2.** Describe three elements that help give a culture its identity.
- 3.** How are family patterns related to culture?
- 4.** How does religion strengthen a culture?
- 5.** (a) What three basic economic questions must every society answer? (b) How do different societies answer those questions?
- 6. Synthesizing Information** How do the arts in the United States help to unify the nation?
- 7. Writing Across Cultures** Write a paragraph explaining how the arts and literature can help us learn about other cultures.