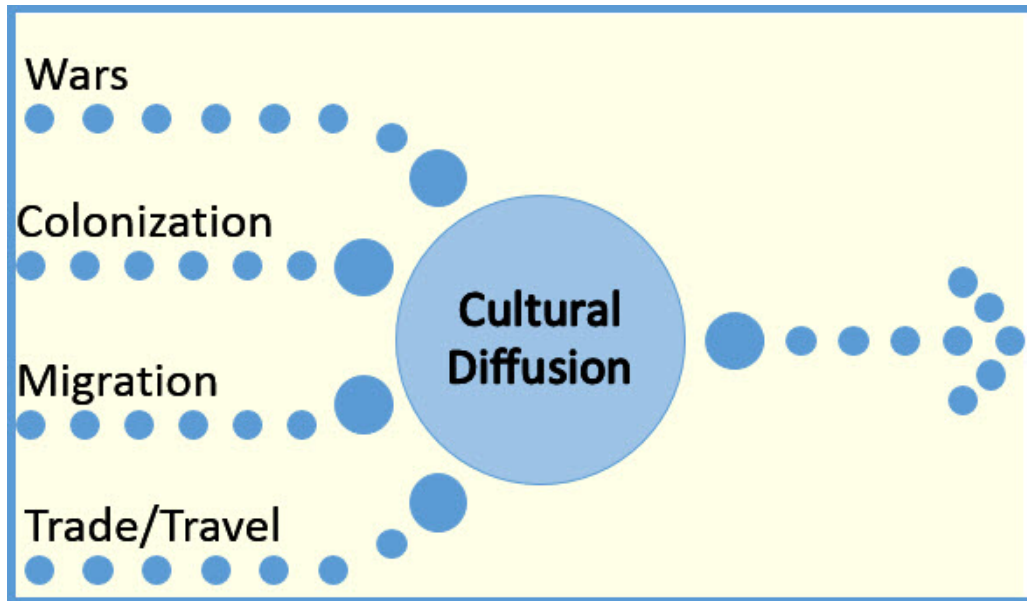


CHANGE THROUGH CULTURAL DIFFUSION



Unit Overview

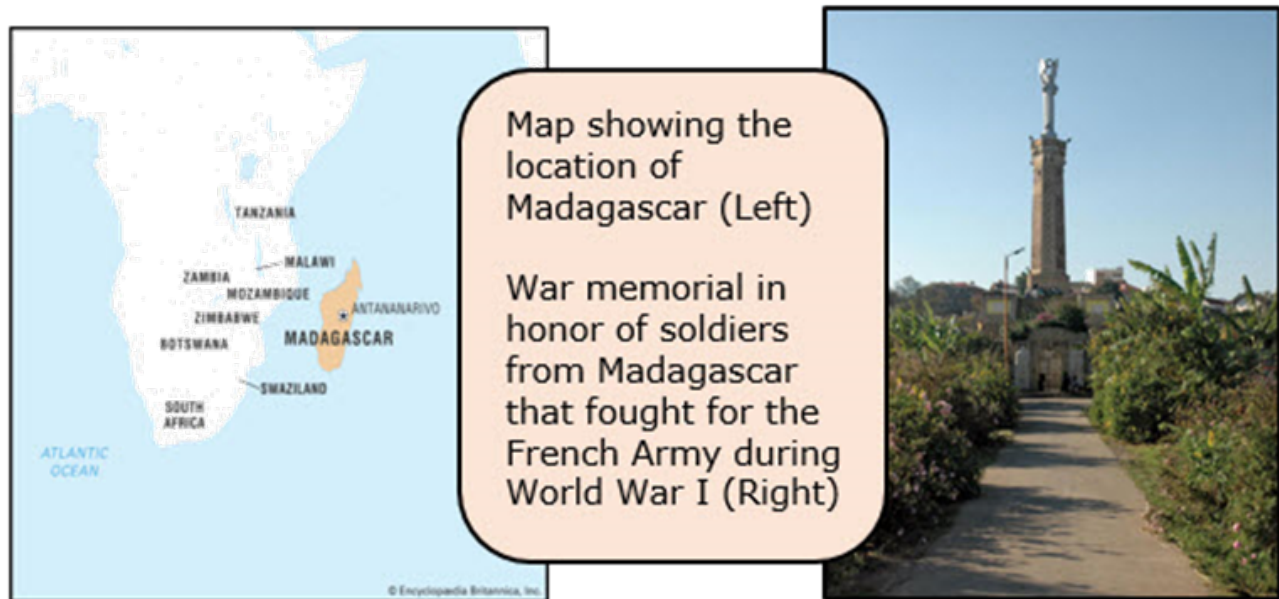
People move to different places for political, social, environmental, and economic reasons. When they do, their languages, traditions, ideas, and products go with them. As they spread from one place to another, these concepts blend into cultures where they were previously unknown. They change the way people live, work, think, and behave. Let's see how it all happens.

How Products and Ideas Spread

Products, traditions, and ideas move from one place to another just like people do. The spread of these things across great distances is called **cultural diffusion**. It is responsible for our knowledge of the great religions of the world, our style of government, and the advancement of technology. Cultural diffusion has given us thousands of inventions that we often take for granted. What causes this exchange? The migration of people is one factor. When individuals move, the things they do and the things that they have go with them. For example, Irish immigrants brought their tradition of observing St. Patrick's Day with them to the United States. Today, many Americans, whose ancestors are not Irish, celebrate the holiday with parades and special foods.

Wars also bring about cultural diffusion. Following World War II, the United States military occupied the defeated nation of **Japan**. Because many U.S. soldiers were stationed there, American movies, music, and magazines were available. As a result, many young Japanese men and women began to wear American clothing and hairstyles. Even after they are granted their independence, countries that were

once colonies keep many of the traditions put in place by those that once ruled them. **Madagascar**, an island off the coast of Africa, was once ruled by **France**. In spite of its independence, French remains the one of the official languages of the nation.

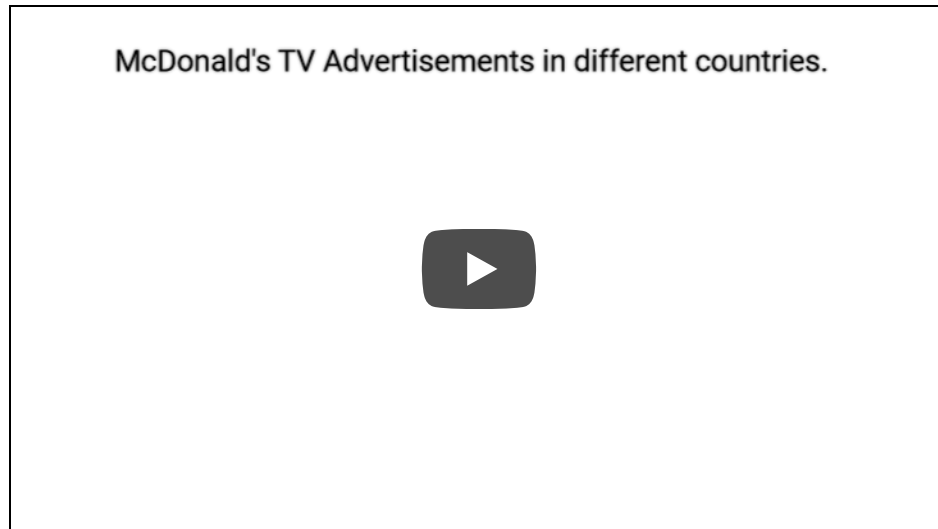


Travel and trade were additional sources of cultural diffusion. The **Phoenicians** once lived along the coast of modern-day Lebanon. They traveled all around the Mediterranean Sea to trade with other people. They offered wood, purple dye, glass, and slaves. The Phoenicians then traded these for wine, which they sold to the Egyptians for gold. Because the trading business required record-keeping, they developed a system of writing that involved various combinations of twenty-two symbols. This idea was adopted by the Greeks and other trading partners. These symbols are the basis of the today's English alphabet. Watch the video called The Phoenicians' Legacy to see how this happened. The American style of government is also a result of cultural diffusion. Certain concepts, such as democracy and representative government, were passed down to us by the ancient Greeks and the ancient Romans.



In early times, the spread of ideas, such as the English alphabet, took several centuries. Things are very different today. Technology and media have made rapid communication possible. It takes only seconds to connect with someone on the other side of the world. Clothing styles, dances, and music are just some of the things that spread quickly from one region to another. When products and ideas move into other cultures, they also change to meet needs and interests. Watch the video listed here by clicking on

the image. McDonald's now has restaurants in many parts of the world. Do these businesses serve exactly the same menu to their Chinese and American customers? Do they use the same commercials to attract buyers? Click on the image for the answers to these questions.



Trade and the Silk Road

Trade happens when people living in different places exchange products. Today, we do this easily by ordering items from Internet-based companies, such as Amazon. We can also sell items on Ebay and other sites. The process not only helps to get things that we want but also connects us with people in other countries. In early times, however, it took a very long time to move products from one region to another. More than 2,000 years ago, people traded goods along a 5,000 mile network of roads that connected China and Europe.

Map Showing the Major Routes of the Silk Road in Red



Called the **Silk Road**, these routes wound their way across the deserts of Asia and over the Himalayan Mountains. Then, one branch of the Silk Road continued to Europe, while another was a southern route to India. Traders with caravans of camels and horses brought silk, tea, fine china, spices, and gunpowder to the Europeans. On the return trip, they brought wool, glass, silver, and gold to China and India. These were not only long but dangerous journeys. Merchants were robbed frequently by thieves looking for quick profits. Travelers on the Silk Road also exchanged customs and traditions. For almost 1,000 years, it was the major line of communication between East and West. Learn more about the Silk Road by clicking on the image and watching the video.



Cultural Diffusion Research Project

How often have you seen the things listed on this chart? All of them are familiar to you thanks to the process of cultural diffusion. Let's do some research to learn more about them. **Where** did they originate? **Why** are they important and still useful? **How far** did they spread? You may be amazed by the answers.

Some Products that Spread through Cultural Diffusion	
Chess	Paper money
Compass	Pepper (Spice)
Cotton	Silk
Gunpowder	Tea
Paper	Toothbrush

To begin your project, select three items from the chart. Then, conduct an Internet search to answer Questions 13 through 24. A good place to begin your research is the online version of the Encyclopedia Britannica. You can access this by clicking on the icon. The user name is **vla**. The password is

student. You will need to find some pictures of the items that you have chosen. Britannica is also a good source for images, too.



Putting It All Together

Now it is time to decide how to present to your teacher the information that you have gathered. Do you want to create a PowerPoint? Do you want to create a poster using a word processing program, such as Microsoft Word? If you have another idea for presenting your work, discuss it with your teacher. Remember—your teacher must be able to open your project and to view it.

Choose a title for your project. For example, you can simply call it My Cultural Diffusion Project or pick something more creative. Remember to include your name along with the title. List your first item. Add at least one picture that describes it. Then, explain **where** it originated, **why** it is useful or important, and **how far** it spread. Use the information from your answers to Questions 13 through 24 to complete this part of the project. Continue with your second and third items. Click on the icon below to see an example.



When you have finished your project, review it carefully before sending it to your teacher. Make sure it includes everything on the checklist.

Does your project include these items?
A title
Your name
Accurate information on each of the three products
Appropriate pictures for each product
Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar
Color and creativity

Once you are satisfied that your project represents your best work, send it to your teacher as an attachment. Before moving on to Unit 8, be sure that you can answer the “Can I” questions listed here with a loud “yes”.

Can I

...define cultural diffusion?

...list some factors that caused cultural diffusion?

...give examples of cultural diffusion?

...explain how trade along the Silk Road resulted in cultural diffusion?



Additional Activities and Resources

[Unit 7 Organizer](#)

[Cultural Diffusion and Sports](#)