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Lesson 23

Cultural Change

Objectives

- To explain the causes of cultural change
- To investigate how cultural change affects social institutions
- To examine the effects of cultural change in one case study
- To describe how cultural change affects societal values

Notes to the Teacher

In modern society, change occurs at an almost alarming rate. Change is a part of every life, but when change occurs at a societal level, the impact can be dramatic. Change generally occurs because of invention, discovery, and/or contact with another culture. Technological advances as well as ideas can be categorized as inventions. Discovery can be of new resources, land, cures, etc. Contact with other cultures happens voluntarily or involuntarily. Values may be altered by change; however, the converse is also valid.

As students explore the basic reasons for societal change, they note the effects created by modifications that result. Students complete the lesson by examining a case study in change—that of Hiroshima after World War II.

The Center for Learning has a novel/drama curriculum unit (*Hiroshima/On the Beach*) that may be useful if any students elect to do the third extension activity.

Procedure

1. Before students arrive, rearrange the room as much as possible. (For example, push all the desks to one corner, turn desks toward the back of the room, etc.) Have a few students acting as confederates to note reactions. After a few minutes, assemble the class, and have the confederates present the reactions the other students had to the changes made.

2. Ask students to describe the changes that have occurred in society during their lifetime. Note their answers on the board. (*computers, fiber optics, cell phones, genetic engineering, etc.*). Then ask students to describe the changes that have taken place during the twentieth century; encourage them to think of societies beyond the borders of the United States (*changes in governments, independence movements, inventions, etc.*) Discuss whether change is always accepted or if there is ever resistance to change. (Both options are valid.)
3. Distribute **Handout 45**, and assign part A. Divide the class into five groups, and assign each group a different section of part A (invention, discovery, diffusion, assimilation, and acculturation). Encourage the groups to generate as many examples as possible.
4. Have each group present its answers to the class. Note that students may use many different examples.

Suggested Responses:

Answers have been removed from these pages for the purpose of posting this sample online.

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5. Have students complete part B of **Handout 45** individually. Have a few students who used different examples present their answers to the class.

Suggested Responses:

Answers have been removed from these pages for the purpose of posting this sample online.

6. Conclude the lesson by giving students a case study in change. Distribute **Hand-out 46** and have students read the case study of Hiroshima and answer the questions that follow. The case mentions Nagasaki. Explain to students that a second bomb was dropped three days later on Nagasaki with similar effect. When they have finished, review their answers and use students' responses to generate a discussion on how the atomic bomb changed forever the lives of those living in Hiroshima.

Suggested Responses:

Answers have been removed from these pages for the purpose of posting this sample online.

Extension

1. Conduct further research into the bombing of Hiroshima and its effect on the city and its residents. Give an oral presentation to your class. Include visual aids.
2. Investigate an example of cultural change such as the changes that have taken place in Russia since the fall of Communism. Present a report to the class on how your example changed each of the social institutions in that society.
3. Read *Hiroshima* by John Hersey, give an oral report to the class, and turn in a book report for extra credit.

Causes and Effects of Cultural Change

Part A.

Examine the causes of change listed below. Working in small groups, cite as many examples as you can. Describe how each example affected society. Use separate paper if you need more space.

1. Invention

2. Discovery

3. Contact with another culture

diffusion—movement of cultural traits from one society to another

assimilation—blending of cultures

acculturation—the changes that occur as a result of an involuntary contact of a subordinate culture by a dominant one

Part B.

Working individually, choose one example from part A, and illustrate how it changed the five social institutions (government, religion, economy, education, and family).

Case Study: Hiroshima

Read the following essay, and answer the questions that follow. Be prepared for class discussion.

Hiroshima had a long and celebrated past in the history of Japan. During the Sino-Japanese War, it served as the center for the supreme military command. By the turn of the twentieth century, it was home to the Higher School of Education, only the second such school in the country. During the first half of the twentieth century, its industries, especially those related to the military, grew tremendously.

In one brief flash, Hiroshima changed forever. On August 6, 1945, the atomic bomb destroyed Hiroshima, killing over 100,000 people, leveling the city, and causing the area to be turned into an inferno. The temperature at ground zero was several million degrees Celsius. Approximately 350,000 people, the city's entire population, were exposed to the effects of the bomb; by December 1945, the death toll had risen to 140,000. Such figures are speculative, since all records had been destroyed by the blast and subsequent blaze.

Diseases related to radiation such as leukemia, other cancers, and keloids (swollen, twisted skin over scar tissue) plagued many of the survivors. Even the unborn were affected by exposure. To add insult to injury, a number of deadly typhoons and floods hit the city shortly after the bombing. Some people believed that Hiroshima would be uninhabitable for seventy years.

After the bombing, though, the survivors of Hiroshima began to rebuild. They had lost the entire infrastructure of normal city life—transportation, fire and police facilities, schools, hospitals, businesses, and government agencies. Yet they rebuilt. Today Hiroshima is once again a bustling and modern city that boasts a healthy economy and numerous universities.

One success story begins shortly after the bombing. The Takaki Bakery was built from the ashes of destruction. Wheat flour was being distributed, and one family decided to bake bread, a food rarely used in Japanese culture. Because of the severe food shortages, the business grew and bread became a common staple in Hiroshima. That bakery is so successful that, ironically, it now has branches in California.

As Hiroshima rebuilt, new industries were introduced. Automobile, steel, ship-building, machinery, and textile factories replaced the primarily military industries of the pre-war period. By the 1970s, Hiroshima had the world's largest steel mill. Land reclamation projects and new port facilities added to the growth of the city.

Among the changes evident in the lives of the residents of Hiroshima as a result of the dropping of the A-bomb is its commitment to peace and the elimination of nuclear weapons. Numerous museums and the Peace Memorial Park reinforce their resolve to world peace. The following excerpt from the *Appeal from Hiroshima and Nagasaki for a Total Ban and Elimination of Nuclear Weapons* demonstrates their intention.

Forty years have passed since the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the end of the Second World War. In spite of the intense desire of the A-bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the people of all the world that such tragedies must never be repeated, nuclear weapons over one million times more destructive than the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs are now stockpiled, the result of the on-going nuclear arms race.

The use of nuclear weapons will destroy the whole human race and civilization. It is therefore illegal, immoral and [a] crime against the human community.

Humans must not coexist with nuclear arms.

With effective activities for the prevention of nuclear war now developing throughout the world, the elimination of nuclear weapons, as a common international task, has become most urgent and crucial for the very survival of the whole of humanity. Along with the survivors and on behalf of those who died and cannot now speak for themselves we appeal from Hiroshima and Nagasaki:

There must never be another Hiroshima anywhere on earth.

There must never be another Nagasaki anywhere on earth.

Now is the time to call for the complete prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. Let us work together urgently to achieve a total ban on the use, testing, research, development, production, deployment and stock-piling of nuclear weapons.¹

Answer the following questions based on the reading and other knowledge you may have pertaining to Hiroshima.

1. If you had lived in Hiroshima in 1945 and survived the blast, how would your life have immediately changed?
2. What changes would have taken place in the social institutions?
3. How did societal values change among the people of Hiroshima since the dropping of the bomb?
4. Give examples of how invention, diffusion, and acculturation affected the postwar residents of Hiroshima.

¹Delegates to the Annual Atomic and Hydrogen Bomb Conference, "Appeal from Hiroshima and Nagasaki," *Appeal from Hiroshima and Nagasaki for a Total Ban and Elimination of Nuclear Weapons* (Hiroshima, 1985, accessed June 12, 1998); available from <http://www.prop1.org/prop1/jhirosh.htm>.