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Material World
A Global Family Portrait

Curriculum Guide

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	iv
POWERPOINT LECTURE NOTES.....	S1
POWERPOINT HANDOUTS.....	H1
CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS.....	A1
WRITING PROMPTS.....	A4
POSTER BASED ACTIVITIES.....	A6
PHOTO INVENTORIES.....	A21
STRATEGIC READING.....	A33

INTRODUCTION

This curriculum guide is intended to help students analyze the Material World posters. It contains the following components:

- A PowerPoint® presentation that features guided discussion questions that help students analyze the 12 photographs, uses animations to break down each photograph into its constituent parts, and provides information about each one.
- Critical thinking questions based on Bloom’s Taxonomy that get students to delve deeper into the topics and concepts conveyed in the photographs.
- Poster activities that have students organize and analyze statistical information presented in the posters. Students also complete graphic organizers to assist them with their analyses.
- Writing prompts that offer ideas for paragraph and essay topics related to the posters.
- Strategic reading exercises that have students read passages from the Material World book and selected Web sites, then complete graphic organizers to help them make sense of what they’ve read.

These components may be used in any order and combination, depending on your classroom needs. However, we suggest starting with the PowerPoint® presentation since it provides an overview of each of the 12 countries and their corresponding photographs and allows students to proceed to the subsequent sections with a good basic understanding of the countries.



Material World photographer Peter Menzel with Buddhist monks in Bhutan

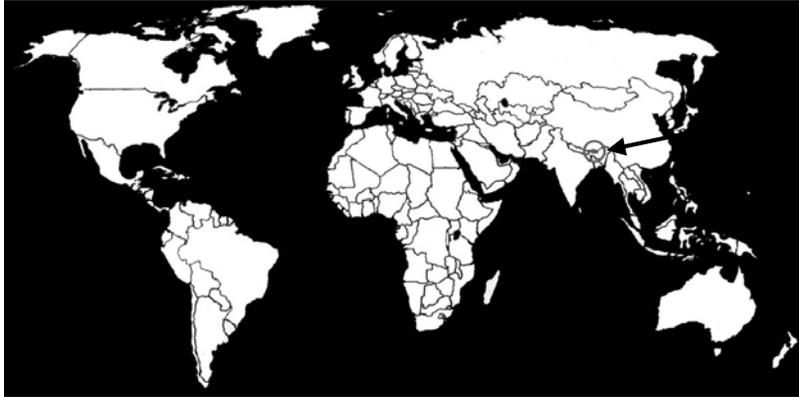
1

The following slides feature the homes and possessions of twelve families whose environments and lifestyles differ from each other in significant ways. *Material World* photographer Peter Menzel traveled to various countries and invited families to be photographed for this project. Each family that agreed to participate was asked to place all of its possessions in front of the family home. This created the scene we see in each family's "Big Picture." The photographs provide a revealing glimpse into the families' daily lives. They also reveal information about the societies in which the families live and their most important values. As you go through the following slides, think about the similarities and differences between the various families and their environments and cultures. In what ways can you relate to each family's experience? What are the most striking differences between your life and theirs?

Table of Contents

- Bhutan
- Cuba
- Mali
- Kuwait
- South Africa
- Mongolia
- Japan
- Iceland
- Thailand
- Western Samoa
- Mexico
- United States

Bhutan



- Small, mountainous country
- Traditional agricultural lifestyle
- Social, medical, and environmental difficulties

3

Bhutan is a tiny, mountainous country nestled between India and Tibet. Its people practice Buddhism and live a very traditional lifestyle. Most people farm and live in small villages. In an effort to preserve the country's traditional characteristics, the Bhutanese government allows relatively few tourists to enter the country each year.

The Bhutanese people have a low life expectancy, a high rate of infant mortality, and high levels of infectious disease. In recent years, however, Bhutan has made significant advances in longevity and curtailing disease: for example, life expectancy has gone up nearly 12 years in the past decade alone, and increased access to safe water and sanitation has reduced the spread of infection-based illnesses. Government programs have made plastic pipe available for bringing water from unpolluted sources to people's homes and have also mandated the use of pit latrines in place of "going bush." Bhutan still has to deal with environmental degradation that has resulted from large livestock herds that overgraze, as well as a rising demand for wood to be used for fuel.

The following slides present a photograph of the Namgay family and their home in the small village of Shinka, Bhutan.



(Give students approximately one minute to view the image, then move on to the following slide.)



Although the Namgay family is wearing a rainbow of colors, two other dominant colors appear in the photograph.

- What are those colors, and why are they so widespread?

5

Brown and green are the dominant colors. Bhutan is still an agrarian country, and therefore much of it is covered in farmland (brown) and pasture (green).



- What type of work do you think the Namgay family does?

- Do you think they have to travel far from their home to do this work?
- What evidence do you see in the photograph to support your answer?

6

The family does agricultural work, including laboring in the field and tending to their cattle. We can see the cattle to the right of the house. We can see some farming implements to the left of the family in this picture. Since the fields lie all around the house, the family does not need to travel far from their home to do their work. This family owns five acres of land.

The main work involving some travel from home is collecting firewood. The uncle walks into the hills each morning to collect wood so that the family can cook meals.