



Lesson #7: Peruvian Culture

Timeline

Amazon Glimpse	20 minutes
Travel Peru!	30 minutes
Demographics	30 minutes
Catching Up!	40 minutes

Materials

Copies of Demographics
Worksheets for students and a
copy of A Glimpse of
Amazonian Culture for you

Journals, pens.

Student Preparation

HW7: Travel Peru!
RDG: Chapter 3-From
Buttresses to Bromeliads.

Teacher Preparation

Read this lesson, read Chapter
3-From Buttresses to
Bromeliads.

Homework Assignment

HW8, RDG: Chapter 4-From
Buttresses to Bromeliads.



Overview



Understand Peruvian culture from multiple perspectives and catch-up on overdue items.



Goals



- ✓ Understand Peruvian culture is diverse and different from our own culture.
- ✓ Be able to explain how where you live influences how you live.
- ✓ Understand that people from Peru have a very different standard of living compared to that of the United States.
- ✓ Be able to explain how one data source alone does not present a complete picture of life and people in a country. We must look at multiple sources and evaluate their accuracy and quality.

This is NOT a complete lesson
- it is an excerpt.

**For a Complete Lesson,
Contact Global Explorers!**



Background

Amazonian Culture¹

To gain a complete understanding of a tropical rainforest system you must understand the culture and lifestyles of the people who call it home. There are many different groups of human beings living and spending time in the tropical rainforest today from scientists to ranchers, conservationists to gold miners, tourists to indigenous people. There are remote villages deep within the jungle and there are large cities like Iquitos, Peru (approximately 400,000). For the purposes of this background, we have highlighted two groups of people that your students will experience on their Amazon Adventure: indigenous and ribereños.



Indigenous peoples have the longest history of life in the rainforest. Some anthropologists believe the indigenous tribes of the South American rainforest arrived between 10,000 and 20,000 years ago. Just like the native people of North America, indigenous tribes in Latin America are often called “Indians,” a label wrongly applied to them by explorers who believed they had stumbled upon the shores of India when, in fact, they had arrived in the Americas.

It is estimated that there are about 1,000 indigenous tribes still living in the rainforests of the world. Some tribes, like the Yanomami of Brazil, have a significant amount of contact with the outside world. Other tribes have chosen to have little or no contact with any non-indigenous people. Anthropologists think that there are still a few dozen indigenous groups living in the rainforests of Brazil that have never had contact with the outside world. They have remained uncontacted for a number of different reasons. Perhaps it is because they live in an area that is very hard to access or because they live a nomadic life that is hard to track. Other tribes have made it clear that they have chosen to have no contact with outsiders. Some tribes have even gone so far as killing unwelcome “intruders” such as anthropologists and missionaries.

Each indigenous group has its own distinct culture. This includes different language, laws, ceremonies, customs, celebrations, rituals, songs, music, stories and tribal structure. Children are taught about their heritage and essential lessons for survival by their parents and other members of their tribe. They learn how to catch fish, plant crops, hunt for food, gather fruits, nuts and honey, and how to use plants to build shelters, make food and make natural medicines. Many of the children still living a traditional lifestyle do not go to school and learn instead through experience.



Indigenous people of the tropical rainforest have not historically had supermarkets, shopping malls, cars, pharmacies, televisions, CD players or many of the things we use in our everyday lives. Instead, they have developed a tradition of getting everything they need directly from the plants, animals, soil and rivers of the forest. As a result of depending so much on the forest for their survival, indigenous people of the rainforest tend to have a very close connection with nature.

¹ Excerpted from Julie Dubin’s From Buttresses to Bromeliads.



Ribereños: Although indigenous tribes have the longest history of living in the region, the majority of the people who presently live along the waterways of the Amazon are not indigenous, although they too have lived there a long time. Many of their ancestors migrated from other areas of the continent to work on rubber plantations or to join one of the many other short-lived rainforest exploitation booms. Often their ancestors also include local indigenous people and Europeans. Due to their mixed heritage, they are given the name “mestizo” or “mixed” (a literal translation from Spanish). Mestizos who live along waterways in Peru and Ecuador are called “ribereños” (river people – pronounced ri-ber-ayn-ho).

Ribereños and cablocos are adept at living in the surprisingly difficult environment of the Amazon while making good use of the modern perks of civilization that come their way. While indigenous peoples’ culture and health often suffer from outside contact, the ribereños adapt continuously to new input from the outside world.



Ribereños live with a minimal amount of cash and still depend almost exclusively on the forest for their survival. They build their canoes from trees and they get fish from the rivers to eat. They practice sustainable, shifting slash and burn agriculture and use the natural rise and fall of the river for fertilization of their riverside gardens. They build their houses from wood and plants from the forest and raise any livestock they may have on bits of pasture. They may even keep chickens under their houses! Their numbers have historically been small and their impact on the local environment also small. However, overpopulation caused both by increased childhood survival rates (due to increased use of western medicine) and the steady influx of people (often encouraged by the government) is upsetting the balance and is putting a terrible strain on the forest, the cleared lands, and the waterways.

There are not many ways for ribereños to make money. Selling produce, meat and fish is hard as the distance to large markets (generally in large cities) is often great. A poor farmer often will make the long journey himself if he has a large enough boat. If he does not have his own boat, he may choose to pay for transport on one of the large river taxis or “river buses” commonly seen making their way up or down the Amazon laden with people, their produce and livestock on the way to market. Another option includes paying someone else to take the produce to market, a huge expense. Profits are generally very small, so families typically rely on subsistence farming, fishing, gathering and some hunting to survive.

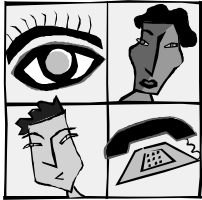
Ribereño children are resourceful, cheerful and resilient. However, they do not have an easy life. Many have lifetime battles with parasites and other health issues. They have few opportunities to change their lives and there is always a lot of work that needs to be done. Everyone has to pull his or her own weight.

The children are offered a free, government-sponsored primary education, in theory. Of course, children must live close enough to a school to have the opportunity to attend. The subjects taught are basic and often have little bearing on the lifestyle of the childrens’ families. Knowledge of reading, math and geography introduces them to a world they have little access to. This is a source of frustration for some but an inspiration to others.



Remembering Culture Basics

The activities in this lesson have students begin exploring the Peruvian culture by looking at a variety of different kinds of data. Our goal is to provide your students with a flavor of what life is like for people living in the Amazon. Keep in mind from your understanding of culture that:



- Culture is not a static “thing”, rather it is a dynamic, ongoing and ever changing process.
- To gain a complete understanding of a country, you need to draw on multiple sources of information and evaluate their quality and their perspective
- It is impossible to really understand a culture from first/brief observations or research
- It is easy to misinterpret and misunderstand practices, beliefs and ideas of a different culture.

Dealing with Difficult Information²

Some of the data that your students will discuss in this lesson, particularly demographic information, can reveal sometimes shocking differences between cultures that can be hard to understand. Although we live in a world increasingly connected by immigration, travel, and technology, glaring gaps in resource distribution continue to divide the world. Most people live with fewer goods in an entire year than an American will use in a single day. Out of the estimated 6.1 million people currently living on the planet, some 1.2 billion people live on less than \$1 a day. (\$1 per day qualifies as “extreme poverty”). Half of the world lives on \$2 a day or less.³



Growing up in the U.S., where \$1 buys you a soda and little more, it is hard to imagine basing your entire existence off such a miniscule amount. It is easy to take our material standard of living for granted. Since the Global Explorers International Field Workshop will be many student’s first contact with the developing world, it is important to sensitize them to the differences in wealth they will experience. Many students will carry cameras worth more than some indigenous people earn in a year. Exposing students to such gaps in resource distribution at an early age will help them grow into responsible world citizens, more aware of their role and their responsibilities in an interconnected world.

We encourage you to have thoughtful, honest discussions about these issues as they come up in your classroom. Often times, it is these issues that will impact students more than any other at the end of their Global Explorers year.

² Special thanks to Gina Curler, PhD candidate in Cultural Anthropology at University of Wisconsin for her volunteer contribution in preparing this section of the background.

³ United Nations Population Fund, 2001. The State of World Population: Footprints and Milestones, Population and Environmental Change.

A Glimpse of Amazonian Culture

1. Read aloud the story *A Glimpse of Amazonian Culture* from the Worksheets.

Prior to reading the story explain that it is a brief description of one person's first experience with Amazon culture.

2. Facilitate a discussion about the story with your students.

The purpose of this discussion is to share expectations, hopes and fears that the students have specifically about their cultural experience in Peru. Some important discussion questions include:

- What are some of the things that this story tells us about Peru?
- What are some of the questions the story raises in your own minds?
- How does reading a story through the author's eyes affect our perception of Peru?
- What are some of the aspects of Peruvian culture that **you** would be excited to experience?
- What worries do you have about meeting people from a totally new culture?
- How much do you think you can learn about Peruvian culture in a short visit?
- What do you think the people who met David for the first time thought of him? What are some of the things that Peruvians might think about our group when they first meet us?

3. Explain the importance of drawing on multiple sources of information to understand a culture.

Now ask the students if the story above gives them a complete picture of Peruvian culture. Explain that to gain a complete and accurate picture of a country, you need to draw on multiple sources of information and evaluate their quality and their perspective. This story is only one perspective. When researching a culture you can draw on many different types of information including personal accounts (like this one), demographic information, history, politics and much more. The important thing to remember is that no one source of information is going to give you a complete picture.



Travel Peru! A Special News Series

1. Introduce the concept that where we live influences how we live.⁴



Present students with the question: How does where we live influence how we live? Invite responses. Next, ask students to reflect on the place they call “home” and how their own physical surroundings (location, population, climate, physical features, etc.) influence the way they live. To further student thinking about where they live, give categories, such as the jobs that are available, the type of homes people live in, the transportation systems available to them, the things they do to have fun, the clothing people wear, the food they eat, and so on. Ask students to generate examples for each category.

Ask students this question: If you lived somewhere else in the world, in a place that was very different, how might your life be different? Give examples such as, if you lived in Alaska instead of Florida? If you lived in Los Angeles, California instead of a small suburban town in Kentucky? If you lived in the mountains instead of by the ocean? In Canada or France instead of in the United States? On a farm rather than in a city?

Ask students to draw conclusions about how where we live influences how we live.

2. Break the class into groups to share their homework assignment.

Explain that the class is going to learn more about the people of Peru by sharing their homework assignments. Each student in the class spent time conducting research to prepare a newspaper article for this session. Now, they are going to share those articles with their classmates.



Break the class into groups in such a way that each group has a representative from all four of the articles that students wrote (Geography and Nature, Politics and Life Today, Customs and Traditions and History). Next, distribute the *How does where you live influence how you live? Worksheet*. Explain that one by one, the students should read their articles to their classmates. As each student reads his/her article, the listening students should make notes on their *How does where you live influence how you live? Worksheet*.

Mingle with the students as they share their stories. Once they have completed their task, remind them that:

- You need to draw on multiple sources of information and evaluate their quality and their perspective.

In this activity they learned from their classmates who had conducted research. Next, they are going to learn from some demographic information...

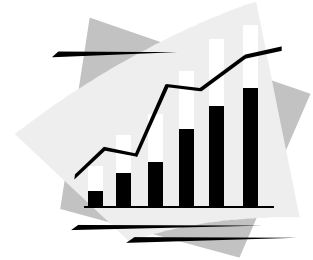
⁴ This description (#1) is taken directly from the Peace Corps Geography: It's More than Just a Place activity found online at <http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/guides/insights/geography/module1/lesson1/lesson1.html>.



Demographic Information⁵

1. Briefly discuss the role of demographic data in painting a picture of a culture.

Ask students if they know what the word “demography” means. Explain that demography is the study of human populations using numerical data and statistics. It is another way to learn important facts about a culture. Give some examples of demographic information about your own class. For example, what percentage of students are: Male versus female? Have birthdays between January and June? Are over the age of (enter age)? Ask students if they can give examples of demographic information about the United States.



2. Compare Peruvian demographics with those of the United States.

Distribute Country Comparisons Worksheets and Comparison Matrix to the class. Explain that different countries are classified according to different categories.

Now walk them through the Comparison Matrix Worksheet, using the first category (Per Capita Income) as an example of how to fill it out. Discuss the meaning of “Per Capita Income” and have them find the information. Per Capita Income takes the Gross National Income (formerly Gross National Product) and divides it by the total population of people.

Ask students: What conclusions can you draw? What questions do you have? Explain that a statistic or piece of numerical data does not always answer all of our questions. In fact, sometimes it can raise more questions than it answers.

Now, allow the students 5-10 minutes to look through the information and fill out the matrix.

3. Facilitate a discussion about demographics.

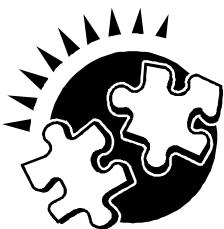
Good discussion questions include:

- What are some of the things you noticed about the differences between Peru and the USA?
- Provide some examples of some of the conclusions you were able to draw.
- What kinds of questions did the demographic information raise?
- What are the limitations of demographic data?

4. Finally, discuss what you learned as a class about Peruvian culture.

Good discussion questions include:

- How did different kinds of information give a different picture of Peru?
- What questions do you still have about Peruvian culture?



⁵ Special thanks to Gina Curler PhD Candidate in Cultural Anthropology for her help in putting this lesson together!



Demographic Information⁶

1. Use this time to catch up on things that you have not finished.

In our experience, groups need this time to catch up on things like their Preliminary Service Projects, their homework assignments or activities from other lessons. Use this time however you see fit!

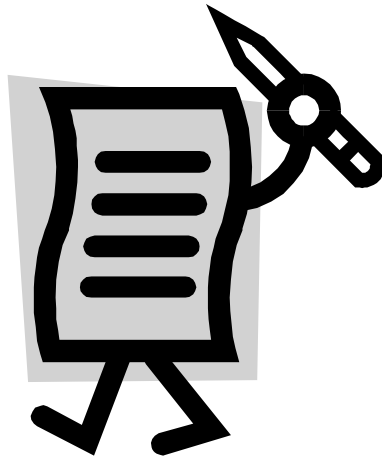


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Lesson

Worksheets & Homework

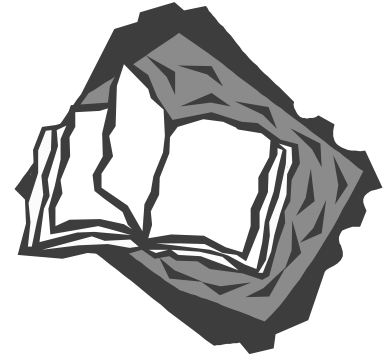


SAMPLE WORKHEET & HOMEWORK ONLY

Not all worksheets nor the complete homework assignment for this lesson are included. For a complete lesson, contact Global Explorers.

A Glimpse of Amazonian Culture⁷

After living in the Peruvian Amazon for three months, I learned that the lifestyle and culture of Peruvian people brought me great joy and sadness. Peru surprised, frustrated, shocked, and embraced me; sometimes, all at once! I was in Peru to research several conservation projects located in the town of Manco Capac, near the headwaters to the great Amazon River. It took me 36 hours to travel by boat from the bustling town of Iquitos to the riverside community where I lived and studied.



The first thing that struck me when I arrived in Manco Capac was how far away I was from the world I knew. There were no phones, no televisions, no electricity except in the evenings, and no running water. It was amazing to me that the 500 residents of Manco Capac lived this way every day of their lives. I could not think of a single person in the United States that lived like this.

I realized quickly that the lifestyles of the “ribereños” was very simple. Families built their own homes usually out of the trees and palms from the surrounding forest. Each home typically had three rooms: a living room, a bedroom and a kitchen. Parents and kids all slept in the same room. They cooked in the kitchen using firewood and had a hole dug in the backyard for a toilet. The families fished, hunted or farmed for almost all of their food from the forests around Manco Capac. The only things they needed to buy were basic necessities like rice, spices, flour, milk, paper products and clothing. The tropical rain forest supplied the rest!

At times, the fact that the Peruvians in this community had so little would bring me down. What gave me the right to own so many things when these people had so little? *My* family in the United States owned two televisions and two cars. These people might not make enough money in their entire lives to own one television, much less a car. It just didn’t seem fair.

At other times, though, I felt that the people in Manco Capac had so much. Though poor, the people were warm and welcoming. They had a desire to learn about new things and new places and to teach about their own culture with pride. They maintained very close families: brothers, sisters and grandparents often lived in the same home, or within minutes of each other. People also knew how to have a good time. There was a group soccer game daily, kids played volleyball and many adults

⁷ This piece was written by David Shurna based on his experience working with The Nature Conservancy as a part of his Master’s research in Peru.

and kids alike took afternoon siestas. They celebrated holidays with big fiestas. And there was never a sense of the need to rush to get things done. Life was laid back.

Many days I thought that despite the fact that these people lacked many of the material goods that I had back home, they had everything a person needs to really live a good life. They had friends, family, food, shelter and fun. What more is necessary?

Though I feel that I learned a lot about Peruvian culture in three months, I also feel that I hardly learned anything. Sure, I saw what life was like, but I saw it from my own eyes. Did I really understand how people *there* experienced life? It was not until the last couple of weeks during my stay that people really started opening up to me and sharing detailed stories about their lives. What would have happened if I stayed three more months? A year? Twenty years? Would my understanding of their culture have changed?

In the end I am grateful for what I was able to share with the people of Manco Capac. I shared a piece of who I am just as they shared who they are with me. In the process, I can only hope that they learned as much as I did.





HOMWORK # 7: TRAVEL PERU! A SPECIAL NEWS SERIES



Reading: Read Chapter 3 - From Buttresses to Bromeliads

Directions: You and your classmates have just been hired on contract by your local newspaper to prepare several feature articles on Peru for the Travel Section of the newspaper. Your topic is: *Geography and Nature in Peru*. Your goal is to write a 1 page article for the newspaper about this topic.

Please remember the following as you write your article:

- Come up with a good headline that will capture the reader's attention.
- Make the article exciting for readers so they will want to keep reading!
- To create an accurate picture of an area, you need to draw on several sources of information and evaluate their quality. Keep a good record of where you get your information.
- Summarize information in your own words or use quotation marks to indicate that you are using someone else's words.
- Research can include looking at books, internet, magazines, music and more!
- Remember to use information from your Global Explorers textbooks as well!



Questions: (Please be sure to answer these questions in your article.)

- ? What are some of the different kinds of ecosystems in Peru? Where are they located?
- ? Where are some of the protected areas/National Parks in Peru?
- ? What are the major physical features of the land in Peru (for example, where are the mountains ranges, primary rivers, and ocean)?
- ? What are some of the main cities in Peru (be sure to include Iquitos)? Where are they located? What are their populations, elevations and climate (temperature and rainfall)?
- ? What are some of the exciting plants and animals that can be seen in Peru? Are any in danger of extinction?
- ? Be ready to show where all of these things are on a map of Peru in class!
- ? Specifically about the Peruvian Amazon: Where are the largest parks in Peru that protect the Amazon jungle? How large are these parks and when were they created?

Check Out These Sites On the Web...

www.encyclopedia.com

www.nationalgeographic.com/maps

www.free-weather.com

www.enjoyperu.com