Seeds and Stories

A community gathering reveals what people keep, share, and pass on.

SS24.HG.4b "Differentiate between material and nonmaterial culture within a society, including folk customs."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two physical items, circle two shared ideas or unwritten rules, and write 1 beside an informal practice passed between people. Use your marks to distinguish material from nonmaterial culture.

Spring in Cedar Glen

1. In the fictional town of Cedar Glen, spring planting begins with a Saturday gathering in the public square. Neighbors set folding tables beside the fountain and lay out envelopes of seeds saved from last year's gardens. Some bring metal tins to keep the packets dry; others carry notebooks filled with planting dates. A student named Maya notices that the envelopes travel from hand to hand, but nobody charges a price. One neighbor offers bean seeds to a newcomer, who has only a small balcony. The newcomer chooses a compact variety and promises to share what grows there next year.

2. As people trade, they follow an unwritten rule: take only as many seeds as you can plant, and leave enough for others. No sign lists this rule, yet older neighbors explain it to children who join the exchange. Several residents say that sharing seeds shows trust because each packet holds a chance for another household to grow food. Maya hears two gardeners disagree about the best planting date, but both wait while a child makes a choice. The gathering includes people with different languages and gardening methods, so no single person speaks for everyone in town.

3. Before the first spring rain, some Cedar Glen families slip a packet of seeds under a neighbor's door. Residents recall learning this habit from parents or longtime neighbors, rather than from the town council. One family attaches a note wishing for a good growing season; another leaves the packet without a note. Maya's family has never done this, although they attend the public exchange every year. Later, Maya sorts the items she collected: a paper envelope, a handwritten note, and a packet of seeds. She also remembers the quiet hope behind the doorstep gift, which she cannot put in her bag.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Name two physical items at the exchange. Why do they count as material culture?

2. What unwritten rule guides the exchange? Why does it count as nonmaterial culture?

3. Which action before the first spring rain is a folk custom? Use one detail about how people learned it to explain your choice.

4. The doorstep gift includes a seed packet and a wish for a good growing season. Which is material, and which is nonmaterial? Explain.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Think of a real or imagined community event different from Cedar Glen's seed exchange. In 4 to 5 sentences, describe one physical item, one shared belief or unwritten rule, and one informal habit passed between people; explain which is material, which are nonmaterial, and why the habit is a folk custom.

ANSWER KEY

Seeds and Stories

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.HG.4b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two physical items, circle two shared ideas or unwritten rules, and write 1 beside an informal practice passed between people. Use your marks to distinguish material from nonmaterial culture. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Name two physical items at the exchange. Why do they count as material culture?	**The seed envelopes and metal tins are material culture because they are physical objects people use.**
2	What unwritten rule guides the exchange? Why does it count as nonmaterial culture?	**People take only what they can plant and leave enough for others. The rule is nonmaterial culture because it guides behavior rather than being a physical object.**
3	Which action before the first spring rain is a folk custom? Use one detail about how people learned it to explain your choice.	**Some families leave a seed packet under a neighbor's door. It is a folk custom because they learned the informal habit from parents or longtime neighbors.**
4	The doorstep gift includes a seed packet and a wish for a good growing season. Which is material, and which is nonmaterial? Explain.	**The packet is material because it is a physical object. The wish is nonmaterial because it expresses an idea.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At my imagined neighborhood's summer music night, families bring painted wooden stools to the park. The stools are material culture because people can touch them. People believe everyone should have a chance to perform, and that shared belief is nonmaterial culture. Older neighbors teach newcomers to clap twice before the first song, an informal habit passed down over time. That clapping is a folk custom and part of nonmaterial culture because it is a learned action, not an object.

Accept other physical items and shared ideas supported by the passage. For Your Turn, the informal habit should be learned through community practice rather than required by an official rule.