

Routes of Culture

Trace how movement and place shaped cultural diffusion during U.S. expansion.

SS.8.G.4.3 "Use geographic terms and tools to explain cultural diffusion throughout the United States as it expanded its territory."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline geographic terms, circle transportation routes or map references, and number three examples of cultural diffusion in the passage. Your marks should show how people, places, and movement spread customs across the growing United States.

Expansion Carried Culture

- ① In 1803, the Louisiana Purchase moved the United States westward to the Rocky Mountains. On maps, the Mississippi and Missouri rivers appear as travel routes for settlers, traders, and Native peoples. As people moved along these waterways, they carried languages, foods, music, farming methods, and beliefs. This spread of ideas and customs from one group or place to another is cultural diffusion. For example, French-speaking communities and French place names remained important in parts of the lower Mississippi Valley after the region joined the United States.
- ② After Texas became a state and the United States gained western lands from Mexico in 1848, new contact zones formed across the Southwest. A contact zone is a place where different cultural groups meet and influence one another. Maps show this border region, where Mexican traditions blended with those of incoming Anglo American settlers. Spanish words entered local English, and foods such as tortillas and chile peppers became familiar beyond the Southwest. Trails and later railroads linked the region to distant markets, helping these customs travel east as well as west.
- ③ Expansion also brought the Pacific Coast into stronger connections with the rest of the country. The Oregon Trail carried migrants to the Pacific Northwest, while the Gold Rush drew people from many regions and nations to California. In 1869, the transcontinental railroad connected rail lines near the Missouri River to Sacramento, shortening travel across the continent. Chinese immigrants shared labor, businesses, and traditions in western towns, even while facing discrimination. Goods, people, and cultural practices then moved more quickly between coastal ports, interior cities, and eastern communities.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did the Mississippi and Missouri rivers help cultural diffusion in the Louisiana Purchase territory?

2 Why did the Southwest become a contact zone after 1848? Describe one cultural change that happened there.

3 How did trails and railroads spread customs beyond the Southwest and Pacific Coast?

4 How could a map help a historian explain cultural diffusion in this passage? Use one example from the text.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write four sentences about a cultural practice not named in the passage that spread during United States expansion. Name a group or place, a route or geographic feature, a new region, and explain how contact with other people could spread the practice.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline geographic terms, circle transportation routes or map references, and number three examples of cultural diffusion in the passage. Your marks should show how people, places, and movement spread customs across the growing United States. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Mississippi and Missouri rivers help cultural diffusion in the Louisiana Purchase territory?	They served as travel routes. People moving along them carried languages, foods, music, farming methods, and beliefs.
2	Why did the Southwest become a contact zone after 1848? Describe one cultural change that happened there.	Different groups, including Mexican residents and incoming Anglo American settlers, met in the border region. Mexican traditions influenced local culture, such as Spanish words entering English or tortillas and chile peppers becoming familiar.
3	How did trails and railroads spread customs beyond the Southwest and Pacific Coast?	They linked regions to distant markets and shortened travel. People, goods, and cultural practices could move east, west, and between the coast, interior, and eastern communities.
4	How could a map help a historian explain cultural diffusion in this passage? Use one example from the text.	A map can show places and routes that connected groups, such as the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, the Southwest border region, or the railroad from near the Missouri River to Sacramento.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

German immigrants brought brewing traditions to cities along the Mississippi River during the nineteenth century. Steamboats and railroads carried people and supplies between the Midwest and other regions. In contact zones, local residents tasted new styles of beer and visited German-owned businesses. The tradition spread beyond river cities as goods and workers traveled west and east.

Accept equivalent evidence-based responses that connect a geographic location or direction with a movement route and a cultural change. For Part 3, accept historically plausible examples that include all four requested elements.