Customs and Traditions

**ethnic group:** relating to or of a group of people that have certain characteristics in common; characteristics may include national origin, language, history, race, or culture;

**immigration:** entering a country or region in which one was not born, with plans to make a permanent home there;

**immigrant:** person who immigrates;

**migration:** moving from one country or region to another country or region in order to settle there; often moving as a result of seasonal changes (i.e., climate) or other situations;

**migrant:** person who migrates;

Immigrants or migrants will often relocate, then settle in areas with others of the same or similar ethnic backgrounds. Some ethnic groups exist as a result of acculturation or assimilation, with changes evolving as a result of surrounding cultures, intermarriage, or societal factors. Ethnic groups, and their customs and traditions, are constantly evolving. The changes may happen slowly, throughout time and with each generation. Or, there may be abrupt changes as a result of an event with a major impact on the group.

Students should choose a country or ethnic group for research. Upon completion of the research, they should work to find out as much as possible about the customs and traditions of that particular group. Focus should be on the traditional customs, how the customs and traditions may have evolved and continue to evolve, and how they may be woven into the modern practices of the family or ethnic group.

The following is a list for students to use when trying to find out as much as they can about the folklife of people from a particular country. The list is not meant to be all-inclusive; it is merely a suggested list of topics and ideas:

**Life Situations**
* oral history
* diaries, journals, autograph books
* jokes, anecdotes
* proverbs, family sayings
* storytelling
* games
Arts, Crafts, and Culture
* folk arts
* craftwork
* pysanky
* music
* musical instruments
* dance
* costumes
* weavings
* textile products
* bobbin lace, lace-making, tatting
* jewelry
* decorative arts
* quilting
* stencils, tole painting
* furniture making, furniture painting
* chair caning
* blacksmithing
* taxidermy

Customs and Practices
* holidays
* celebrations
* fairs, festivals
* religious rituals
* medicinal healing ceremonies or practices
* patriotic songs and celebrations
* party songs and celebrations – adults, children
* birthday parties and celebrations – especially milestone ages

Food and Cooking
* types of foods and ingredients
* styles of cooking
* farming
* foods for particular events
* drinks
* wines, alcoholic drinks
* glassware, dinnerware
* table settings

People
* parents, grandparents, great-grandparents
* aunts, uncles, cousins, extended family members
* ancestors
* neighbors
* childhood friends
* well-known people from a particular ethnic group
* authorities, specialists
* folk artists
* folk musicians
* craftspeople
* storytellers

After the research is completed, students should choose a method for sharing the information with classmates, teachers, and others. The method could involve oral presentations, visual displays, or combinations.

Oral presentations
* speech
* verbal report
* storytelling
* debate
* poetry recitation
* song – singing, playing an instrument
* skit, play
* interview

Visual displays
* poster
* mural
* diorama
* model
* map
* brochure, pamphlet
* timeline
* procedural directions
* survey results: bar, line, circle graphs
* display board

Demonstrations
* sing a song, play an instrument, explain the cultural significance
* write a tall tale, folk tale, legend, story, and read it; explain the cultural significance
* make a craft (jewelry, weaving, pottery, other), explain the steps for making the craft and the cultural significance
* wear a costume and perform an ethnic dance
* give a speech or perform an interview with/by an important or famous person from that immigrant group
* find an ethnic recipe; research the ethnic background; learn the steps needed to make the dish; demonstrate the steps needed in order to make the dish; share the final product
* find an ethnic recipe; research the ethnic background; make the dish at home (important, especially if the recipe calls for complicated procedures); explain the step-by-step procedure and share the final product with the class
* find ethnic foods that are used in a variety of ways; research some of the uses; explain different used for ethnic ingredients or foods; demonstrate some of the uses and share foods with the class
* learn about a variety of different herbs and/or spices that are used in ethnic cooking; research the types and reasons for ethnic use; create some foods, using the herbs or spices, and share with the class