MERIT BADGE SERIES

AMERICAN CULTURES

Scouting America

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"Enhancing our youths' competitive edge through merit badges"

Scouting America

Requirements

Always check scouting.org for the latest requirements.

Choose THREE groups that have different racial, cultural, national, or ethnic backgrounds, one of which comes from your own background. Use these groups to meet requirements 1, 2, and 3.

1. Do TWO of the following, choosing a different group for each:
   (a) Go to a festival, celebration, or other event identified with one of the groups. Report on what you see and learn.
   (b) Go to a place of worship, school, or other institution identified with one of the groups. Report on what you see and learn.
   (c) Talk with a person from one of the groups about the heritage and traditions of the group. Report on what you learn.
   (d) Learn a song, dance, poem, or story that is traditional to one group, and teach it to a group of your friends.
   (e) Go to a library or museum to see a program or exhibit featuring one group's traditions. Report on what you see and learn.

2. Imagine that one of the groups had always lived alone in a city or country to which no other groups ever came. Tell what you think the city or country might be like today. Now tell what you think it might be like if the three groups you chose lived there at the same time.

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3. Tell about some differences between the religious and social customs of the three groups. Tell about some ideas or ways of doing things that are similar in the three groups.

4. Tell about a contribution made to our country by three different people, each from a different racial, ethnic, or religious background.

5. Give a talk to your Scout unit or class at school on how people from different groups have gotten along together. Lead a discussion on what can be done to help various groups understand one another better.

Contents

The annual St. Patrick's Day parade in New York City began in 1766 when Irishmen in service to England brought their tradition to the new world. Today, this parade is one of very few that do not allow vehicles of any kind—everyone just marches!

Out of Many, One

The United States is a nation of immigrants. All of us came here from somewhere else—or our ancestors did. You may know a new *immigrant* at school or in your Scout troop, or you might be a newcomer yourself. Certainly, you know people who are descended from earlier arrivals at America's shores. Even American Indians have their origins with people who came here from other places.

All individuals and groups coming to the United States bring parts of their home culture with them: customs and traditions, native languages, favorite foods, styles of dress, art, music, beliefs, and holidays. That's what *culture* is—a shared way of life or a common background among people.

As you explore different cultures and recognize their contributions to the American lifestyle, you will enjoy great food and fantastic music and meet interesting individuals outside your circle of friends. Your efforts will lead to a better understanding of people from various cultural backgrounds, which can help you live in harmony with others in your community.

An **immigrant** is a person who comes to live in a country. An **emigrant** is someone who leaves a country to settle elsewhere.

Technically speaking, anyone born in the United States is a "native" American. However, we often refer to Native Americans as those of American Indian heritage as well as native or indigenous peoples of the Hawaiian Islands, Alaska (Inuits), Puerto Rico, and Guam (Pacific Islanders).

From 1892 to 1954, New York's Ellis Island was the main immigration point of the United States. It has been estimated that 40 percent of Americans had an ancestor arrive there.

Coming to America

The various immigrant groups have had different reasons for making the journey to start new lives in America. Some newcomers wanted to escape unbearable situations, hoping for abundant food and freedom in their new country. Some came in search of work, adventure, riches, or a place to call their own. Others were forced to come to America. Behind every arrival is a story.

While earning the American Cultures merit badge, you will learn the stories of a few immigrant groups that have played major roles in America's history and development. Space is too limited in this pamphlet to cover all the peoples who have immigrated here, but in order to fulfill requirements 1, 2, and 3, you are free to choose other racial, cultural, national, or *ethnic* groups not mentioned.

Ethnic means having a common national or cultural tradition, or a shared origin.

A Common Goal

Meet two Scouts who—like you—are trying to earn the American Cultures merit badge. Nate and Devon are friends from different ethnic backgrounds. Nate is an African American; Devon's ancestors were English. The Scouts have worked on other badges together and depend on each other's strengths to make the most of their experiences. Nate loves U.S. history and collects stories about the early inhabitants of America. Devon's passion is for anything related to computers and software programs. He has learned most of what he knows about history by playing video games. For this merit badge, however, each Scout has agreed to stretch himself by trying to do some of what the other does well.

"OK, Nate, since you're the history buff," Devon said, "why don't you tell me which ethnic groups to research and I'll show you how to find population statistics by group on the internet. I'll even explain how to show the statistics on a spreadsheet."

"A spreadsheet? Cool!" Nate replied. "And let's find photographs of each immigrant group and tack them on a bulletin board along with your research notes. Maybe that will help us get our act together for the talk to our Scout troop or class."

The First Americans

Evidence suggests the earliest Americans came from Asia, crossing a land bridge that connected Siberia and Alaska where the waters of the Bering Strait are now. These ancient immigrants probably were hunters following animals such as the woolly mammoth and the bison along river valleys and across plains. Over time, the various groups developed separate languages and cultures. When Europeans first arrived in the New World, there were more than 300 American Indian tribes or nations with populations in the millions. Through a combination of disease and violence, the populations of these people, from whom modern American Indians are descended, were greatly diminished.

Although the relationship between American Indians and early European immigrants often was hostile, explorer Christopher Columbus wrote this about the Indians: "Of anything they have, if it be asked for, they never say no, but do rather invite the person to accept it, and show as much lovingness as though they would give their hearts."

The San Miguel Mission in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is one of the oldest church structures in the United States.

In 1565—42 years before the English founded their colony in Jamestown, Virginia—the Spanish founded St. Augustine, Florida, now the oldest permanent European settlement in the United States. Then, in 1610, they built the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, New Mexico—10 years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock.

The Spanish

Christopher Columbus reached the New World in 1492, opening the way for Spanish exploration of North and South America. During the 1500s, Spaniards came in search of adventure and treasure and claimed Cuba, Florida, Mexico, and what is now the American Southwest. Roman Catholic priests arrived from Spain to spread their religion to the Indians. Catholics founded missions in Spanish-dominated areas that later became the states of Florida, Georgia, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

Most of Spain's New World possessions, including Mexico, became independent republics by the mid-1820s. In 1848, after a war with Mexico, the United States gained possession of California and the Southwest territories. Before the California Gold Rush, Mexicans outnumbered Anglos in California by about 10 to 1. By 1849, however, Anglos drawn by the promise of gold—had swelled their population to 100,000 compared with 13,000 Mexicans.

Hispanics are people of Spanish or Latin American descent. Many people with Latin American origins prefer to be called *Latino* instead of Hispanic.

Anglos are of English origin.

The Hispanics

Hispanics are members of one of the fastest-growing minority groups in the United States. One of three Californians is Hispanic, and almost half the population of greater Los Angeles is Hispanic. In the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico, population growth and economic opportunity prompted thousands of Puerto Ricans to move to New York City and other large American cities during the 1950s and 1960s. Today, about half of all native Puerto Ricans live in the 48 contiguous states.

Hispanics in America trace their origins not only to Mexico, but also to other Spanish speaking nations. Many Cubans fled to Florida after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, and another wave of immigrants from Cuba followed in 1980.

Plimoth Plantation in Massachusetts is a reconstruction of Plymouth Colony, the first permanent European settlement in New England.

The English

The English began colonizing the New World as early as 1585, with a failed attempt on Roanoke Island off the coast of North Carolina. The first permanent English settlement in America was Jamestown, Virginia, established in 1607. The Pilgrims (English Puritans) settled Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts in 1620. Many of the first colonists left England to escape religious persecution. Others came seeking the possibility of a better life than they could find in their home country.

Other Europeans

While most of America's early colonists were English, people from France, Germany, Holland, Scotland, and other European countries also immigrated to the Colonies to seek religious freedom.

In the early 1800s, English landlords oppressed the Irish, provoking many to flee to the United States. In 1845, a disease began destroying potato crops, a staple food in Ireland. During the Great Potato Famine, nearly a million Irish died and another 1.6 million escaped starvation by going to America.

Other waves of European immigrants included Germans in the 1840s and Italians in the 1880s. As various groups arrived in the United States, they often clashed over housing, jobs, and other social issues.

The Africans

The first Africans in the American Colonies were **indentured servants,** as were many white settlers. But in 1661, Virginia passed laws permitting slavery, a practice that lasted more than 200 years in the United States. About 500,000 Africans, mostly from Western Sudan, were brought as slaves to the United States. Millions more were shipped to other countries. Most black people in America before the Civil War worked as slaves on Southern farms and plantations. Some free black people worked in industry in the North.

After the Civil War and into the 20th century, the determined efforts of African Americans to gain equality and justice led to a strong civil rights movement in the United States. The slave trade, slavery, **emancipation** (freedom), and the civil rights movement shaped African American culture.

Indentured servants agreed to work for someone for several years in return for payment of their passage to America.

Frederick Douglass (1817–1895) was the leading spokesman for African Americans in the 19th century. Born into slavery, Douglass became a famous reformer, author, and public speaker who devoted his life to ending slavery and winning rights for black Americans.

The Chinese and Other Asians

War, high taxes, floods, crowded conditions, and starvation drove many Chinese people to the United States in the mid-1800s. Most Chinese immigrants were male laborers who went to California to join the California Gold Rush of 1849, mainly as independent prospectors. By 1865, many had turned to railroad work, laying track for the Transcontinental Railroad that linked California with the eastern United States. They built irrigation canals and taught their employers how to work with orchard and garden crops.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 closed America's doors to people from China. More than 60 years later, in 1943, a new law extended citizenship rights and once again permitted Chinese immigration. The largest group of Asian Americans is Chinese, followed by Asian Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese.

Chinese laborers work on California's North Pacific Coast Railroad in 1889.

The Chinese often were poorly paid and poorly treated. When ethnic conflicts forced many out of their jobs, they started small independent businesses such as stores, restaurants, and laundries.

The Jews

Jewish refugees first arrived in America 350 years ago—in 1654—and settled in New Amsterdam (modern-day New York City). During the American Revolution, Jews fought in the Colonial army. A Jewish financier named Haym Salomon gave much of his fortune to help the newly established U.S. government. Many Jewish people immigrated to escape anti-Semitism (hostility toward Jews) in their native lands. German Jews began to immigrate to America in substantial numbers in 1830. To escape persecution, Jews from Russia and eastern Europe began to emigrate in the 1880s.

By the time the United States enacted strict immigration quotas in 1924, some 2.5 million Jews from Russia, Poland, Austria-Hungary, and Romania had come to America. Although they still suffered discrimination, American Jews were the largest and most secure Jewish community in the world. Persecution and Nazi atrocities drove more Jews from Europe to America following World War II.

The Arabs

People from Arabic-speaking places in the Middle East first immigrated in significant numbers to the United States around 1875. This influx of Arabs lasted until about 1920. The majority of early Arab immigrants came from Lebanon and Syria, and most were Christians. Like most people who move to the United States, these immigrants were seeking economic opportunities.

A second wave of Arab immigration began in the 1940s. This time, Arabs came to America not so much to earn a better living, but to escape the Arab-Israeli conflict and other wars in the region of the Middle East. Arabs have a shared culture but different faiths. Although many of the Arabs who immigrated after 1940 practiced Islam, many Arab Americans today are Christians. In many U.S. communities, Muslim and Christian Arabs live side by side with each other and with non-Arabs.

Ancestry in the United States*		
Ancestry	**Millions of People Living in U.S.**	**Percent of Population**
Hispanic or Latino	50.7	16.4 percent
German	47.9	15.5 percent
African American	40.1	13 percent
Irish	34.7	11.2 percent
English	25.9	8.4 percent
Italian	17.2	5.6 percent
Asian	14.7	4.7 percent
Scottish	5.5	1.8 percent
British/Scotch-Irish	4.4	1.4 percent
American Indian	2.9	0.9 percent
Arab	1.6	0.5 percent
All others	63.7	20.6 percent
Total population	**303.9**	**100 percent**

*Source: 2010 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

"Thanks for showing me how to find the U.S. Census information on the internet," Nate told Devon as he posted his spreadsheet. "Now that I see the populations of immigrant groups as a percent to the total U.S. population, I'm really surprised how many people there are from some groups and how few from others."

"I know," Devon said, "but I'll bet those statistics probably look a whole lot different when you compare one state or region of the country with another."

Refugees are people who flee their homeland to escape danger or persecution. Thousands of Cuban, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Haitian, Salvadoran, Somalian, Ethiopian, and Sudanese refugees, among others, have reached safety in the United States.

No One Said It Would Be Easy

America has provided a safe haven for many but has offered no guarantee of an easy life. Immigrants often have to take low-paying and dangerous positions. Even today, many new immigrants with good educations and professional standing in their home countries must take jobs that require less skill while they learn English and meet the requirements of their professions in the United States.

At times, great numbers of arriving *refugees* have strained our health care resources and social services. At different points in U.S. history, the government has set immigration *quotas,* or limits, on the number of people allowed to come from specific countries. Immigrants have struggled for equality, faced discrimination, defended themselves in racial and religious conflicts, and competed for jobs. Certain groups were denied citizenship and voting rights until laws were changed. Despite the often tough journey to the United States and the difficulty of making a life here, most immigrants—having lived in America for a year or for generations—enjoy their own ethnic communities as well as their enriching relationships with those from other cultures and countries.

The Statue of Liberty has become a powerful and universal symbol of freedom.

Going Places

Now that Nate and Devon have identified many of the ethnic and racial groups in America and learned some of their historical background, they are ready to study some cultures up close. Nate's aunt in New York City knows that Nate and Devon are working on the American Cultures merit badge, so she has invited them to visit her and has promised to take them to an international street festival. The Scouts cannot wait to go, but they have promised to read some books about the specific cultures that appeal to them before they leave.

"You know what?" says Nate. "I think I'll read some African folktales. I've never read any, and they're from my own culture."

"Well," Devon says, "then maybe I should read about clotted cream—*Devonshire cream*, my grandmother calls it. That's the county in England where my family comes from."

Nate smiles. "Okay, Devon from Devonshire. Let's head to the library. You can tell me what 'clotted cream' is later . . . or maybe *much* later."

Devon grins and shakes his finger. "Ah, Nate, an open mind is a terrible thing to close."

On the following Saturday, the Scouts board a bus to New York City. Devon has brought along two CDs of international music to listen to during the ride. "Did you remember your camera?" he asks Nate.

"Yes, *and* my pocket recorder *and* a notepad," Nate tells him. "I know we won't remember everything unless we take pictures and write stuff down."

Whether you listen to a Mexican mariachi band, taste Hungarian goulash, or learn to dance a Scottish Highland fling, you will want to capture the details of your experience. Follow Nate and Devon on their adventure; their experiences may give you ideas for completing the merit badge requirements.

Taking to the Streets to Celebrate America's Multicultural Heritage

On their first day at the weeklong international festival, Nate and Devon feel as if they've traveled to another planet. They struggle to make sense of things that are different from their way of life. Both feel comfortable with people whose cultures and lifestyles are similar to their own, but they are a little uncomfortable with those whose ways seem odd.

Their sudden exposure to so many unfamiliar cultures all at once makes the friends feel confused, uncertain, and uneasy. They realize they are judging other cultures based on their own background. The Scouts are experiencing *culture shock.*

"I'll bet most American immigrants feel like this," Nate says. "No wonder people from the same country move into the same neighborhood. They probably want to be with people who speak the same language and eat the same foods."

Devon nods. "Right, they want to be near something familiar. But who doesn't?"

You may have observed or heard about an ethnic group in your community. Dig deep for more facts. Your initial impressions and previous information may be inaccurate, or perhaps they only scratch the surface of what there is to learn.

By the second day, the Scouts are relaxing and starting to enjoy the differences among ethnic groups. They make a deliberate effort to be open-minded and to look at each culture based on its customs and not their own.

Food

All along the festival streets, vendors at tented stands present foods from cultures around the world. They call out to the Scouts, offering Czech favorites like sausage-on-a-stick and *kolaches* (pastries filled with meat, cheese, or fruit), Korean *kimchi* (fermented cabbage and radishes), Japanese *sushi*, Greek *baklava* (thin layers of pastry with honey and nuts) and *dolmas* (stuffed grape leaves), and South American *arepas* (fried corn cakes). Soon the boys are sampling a multicultural *smorgasbord*.

Swedish for an elaborate spread of meats, fish, salads, and finger foods served buffet-style, the word **smorgasbord** also can mean an assortment or patchwork of different elements.

Indian Market

The Indian Market in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is an internationally famous event, drawing a crowd from all around the world to the city's historic plaza every August. Each year the market includes about 1,200 artists from about 100 American Indian tribes who show their work in more than 600 booths. The event attracts an estimated 100,000 visitors. For many visitors, this is a rare opportunity to meet the artists and learn about contemporary American Indian art and cultures.

As you sample special dishes from different cultures, try to learn the history and traditions behind the foods and what sets them apart from everyday cooking.

"Hmmm," says Nate as he tastes another spoonful of *gazpacho,* a soup made with tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and onions. "It's spicy—and it's *cold!*"

"Well, my potato soup," Devon says—in a high-pitched voice, "is *just right.*"

"That's not what I meant, Goldilocks. My soup is *supposed* to be cold. In Spain, the people like gazpacho when the weather's hot."

As they try more ethnic foods, the Scouts learn that many traditional dishes are linked to climate and to the availability of vegetables and fruits in the home countries. Potato soup, for instance, comes from Eastern Europe, where root vegetables grow plentifully and the cold winters call for hot soup.

The Scouts find that people identify certain ingredients with the foods of specific ethnic groups, such as paprika in Hungarian dishes, hot chilies in Latin American cooking, and oregano in Italian recipes. They also try special foods served at holidays, such as *matzo*, the unleavened bread eaten at the Jewish Passover.

Nate and Devon watch people as they eat. Some eat with metal utensils; others eat with wooden chopsticks; still others eat with their fingers. Some people pray before eating; some do not. Until now, the Scouts never had considered how many different rituals people have for choosing, preparing, serving, and eating food.

Music, Singing, and Dance

As the festival continues, the friends attend several music and dance performances. Devon thinks he can't carry a tune, and he's self-conscious about trying to learn ethnic dances. "I'm good where I am," he says when the spectators are invited to dance. "You go ahead."

The accordion is the musical instrument most often associated with the lively polka sound.

Nate doesn't hesitate. "You ought to get in on this!" he shouts as he step-hops through the polka, a lively dance from *Bohemia*. Minutes later, Nate is gasping for breath and back on the sidelines with Devon. "Maybe I should learn a slower dance."

When the polka band finishes, a guitarist plays fast-paced music as several men and women perform a *flamenco* dance with much foot stamping, clapping, and twirling.

"Wow," Nate says. "I thought the polka was quick. But do you see how fast that guy is moving his feet?"

Bohemia is a region in what is now the Czech Republic in Eastern Europe.

Flamenco is a style of rhythmic dancing that originated with Spanish Gypsies. Dancers sometimes click a pair of *castanets*—musical instruments like small wooden cymbals—to beat time to the music.

"Yeah. And the music feels so different. I've never heard a guitar played like that either. I better shoot some pictures before they quit," Devon says. "Do you think it's OK? I haven't seen any warning signs."

Nate volunteers to check with someone. When he signals that they have permission, Devon takes several photographs, then marks the film frame numbers in his notepad so he'll remember all the details when he gets the pictures developed.

When the musicians take a break, the Scouts ask them about the instruments they play. They learn that many of the musicians play instruments that had belonged to their parents and grandparents. Nate asks if their grandparents had made them. No, the guitarist says, but he points toward the hand-made crafts area. "Over there," he tells the boys, "you can meet some people who *do* make their own instruments." The Scouts thank him and the other musicians and head for the crafts tent.

Handmade Crafts

The boys approach a woman who is strumming a stringed instrument laid across her lap. Devon asks if she made it herself. The woman says she did and that the instrument is called an Appalachian mountain *dulcimer*. "Dulcimer," she tells them, "means 'sweet music.'"

Developed by early settlers of the Appalachian Mountains, the aptly named Appalachian mountain dulcimer usually is held in the lap and played with a pick.

While Devon examines the dulcimer, Nate turns his attention to an American Indian flute maker who is blowing a meditative song. The musician stops playing to show Nate several flutes, each one slightly different. He explains that different tribes make flutes in their own way. Nate learns that the man is trying to preserve his *Lakota* traditions.

The **Lakota** is an American Indian tribe from North and South Dakota.

Many North American Indian tribes played flutes like these, including the Cherokee, Hopi, Zuni, Lakota, Cheyenne, and Yuchi.

The Scouts are fascinated by the various demonstrations going on throughout the tent. Nearby, a woman explains the intricate stitches in Lebanese needlework. Next to her booth, someone is weaving cloth in a traditional pattern from *Bhutan*. The boys wander to a table where a man is cutting shapes out of tin and punching designs into the metal with a special tool. Nate remembers some Mexican ornaments like the ones the man is making.

Bhutan is a landlocked country in the Himalayas, between India and China.

Bright-colored threads are the mark of a lot of traditional clothing and weaving.

Ukrainian Easter eggs are symbols of the Christian faith as well as pagan spring rituals.

Devon grabs Nate's shirtsleeve. "Look at that!" His friend turns and spots what looks like an egg tree set on a table. Hanging from tiny hooks are about 30 colorful eggs covered with delicate designs. "Wow! What do you call these?" Devon asks the woman seated behind the table. "*Pysanky*," she says. "It means 'Easter egg.' Painting eggs is an old Ukrainian folk tradition. We do it with wax and dyes."

Devon shakes his head. "I can see how certain traditions and crafts are important to different cultures." Nate warns his friend that all the crafts will disappear unless kids learn to do what their parents do, or celebrate in the same ways. "Well, I doubt if I could decorate those Ukrainian eggs without breaking them," Devon says. "I'd probably end up with a whole lot of egg salad!"

Clothing

Everywhere they look, the two Scouts see people in the traditional clothing of their native countries. Some wear costumes for celebrations and folk dances; some wear head wraps that honor religious beliefs; others wear street clothes that reflect cultural customs. Nate and Devon ask several people for permission to take their pictures, then talk with them about the meaning, purpose, and history of their clothing and accessories.

The Scouts also learn how climate and available materials influence the clothing worn in specific cultures. For example, the *sari* worn by Indian women is made of such lightweight fabric that the draped layers keep the person cool in extreme heat. Eskimo sealskin clothing blocks the Arctic winter cold. The ti plant, which grows in Hawaii and other South Seas islands, provides fibers for making traditional apparel such as the Hawaiian hula skirt.

Storytelling

Nate and Devon hear an explosion of laughter in the storytellers' pavilion, so they join the crowd gathered there to hear the treasured stories and legends of many cultures. Some of the stories are told just for fun, but many have deep cultural meaning. Certain stories tell a group's history or preserve traditional wisdom. Other tales carry a message about how to behave and live.

A group of storytellers perform an American Indian folktale, which traditionally combines elements from nature with human ethical problems to teach the audience about morals.

Many traditional storytellers perform at local libraries and bookstores. Ask your librarian or read your local newspaper to find out about upcoming events.

If you can't get to a cultural festival, consider attending a sports event to fulfill the requirements. Besides having a great time, you will have a chance to see how people from a specific culture handle winning and losing, and how they treat their coaches, team members, and star players.

To earn the American Cultures merit badge, Nate plans to learn and teach a traditional story. He listens closely and watches the storytellers' expressions and movements. Their techniques will help him entertain his own audiences.

During a break, Nate asks the storytellers about the history behind the old stories—when the tales were written or performed in the native country. He learns that some tales are *oral traditions*. They have been handed down through the generations, and no one knows just how they began. He also learns that some traditional stories are told only at certain events or celebrations.

Devon prefers more contemporary stories, especially personal accounts of people making the journey from their native country to America. These stories report families' experiences—the successes and the setbacks—of working their way into the mainstream of American life.

Some of the speakers tell how they became "Americanized" as children and adopted the culture of their new country. Their attitudes sometimes conflicted with the beliefs and values of their parents or grandparents, who continued to live by their old traditions.

Devon remembers a trip to the mall with his English grandmother and how upset she seemed when he didn't want to stop shopping long enough for a proper cup of tea. He decides to talk to her when he gets home about her English traditions. And maybe they'll drink some tea.

People and Organizations

As Nate and Devon talk with people at the festival, they discover that many are *bilingual* (they know two languages) and most are *bicultural* (they are as familiar with American culture as with the traditions of the "old country"). Many of the people the Scouts meet are willing to share information about their history, traditions, social customs, and religions. A few are curious why the boys want to know, so they explain they're working on a Scouts BSA merit badge.

The Scouts also stop at exhibits to get information on associations, schools, and other cultural institutions. They find that many ethnic groups sponsor athletic organizations. Devon collects fliers for a Latino soccer league, English rugby teams, and a Japanese judo gym.

As they leave the festival on the last day, Nate and Devon realize they have come to appreciate the differences and the similarities of more than a dozen ethnic groups. They now understand that every culture has its own music and art as well as its own stories, songs, and dances. In each ethnic group and in every generation, talented artists and performers carry traditions forward to honor a culture's people, history, and values.

Find a Festival. No matter where you live, you should have little trouble finding a festival or similar event that is convenient for you to attend. Use the internet (with your parent or guardian's permission) to quickly locate nearby festivals and celebrations. In a search engine, type the name of your city or state and the phrase "ethnic festivals." You might be surprised at the number of events that pop up. You may choose a festival that is focused on one culture only, such as a fair at a Greek Orthodox church, or you may go to a multicultural festival, as Devon and Nate did, where you can experience many ethnic traditions at once. Go and have fun!

Community Life

On the last day of their visit to New York City, Nate's aunt invites the Scouts to go with her to a morning service at an African American church. Devon is eager to go because he has never been inside a place of worship other than his own. Nate thinks he knows what to expect because he has attended services away from home, but never has he seen anything like this big-city church. The congregation numbers in the thousands. When the choir sings, many people jump up and clap to the music. Some even shout out. Nate looks at Devon for his reaction. "In my church," Devon says, "no one makes a peep unless the minister *tells* us to stand up and sing."

Established in 1808, Abyssinian Baptist Church in the New York City borough of Harlem is the oldest African American congregation in America.

On the bus trip back home, Nate and Devon think about which two ethnic groups (besides their own) they want to study. Because of the research they did before their trip plus their exposure to so many cultures at the international festival, the Scouts feel ready to decide. But you may need some more ideas about how to choose, so consider these tips.

Explore Your Community

Do you know your neighbors? The people living near you probably have different backgrounds from yours. Talk to your neighbors (with your parent or guardian's permission) and find out about their ancestry. If your town has a large ethnic community, check the telephone directory for names of civic, social, or religious associations in that neighborhood.

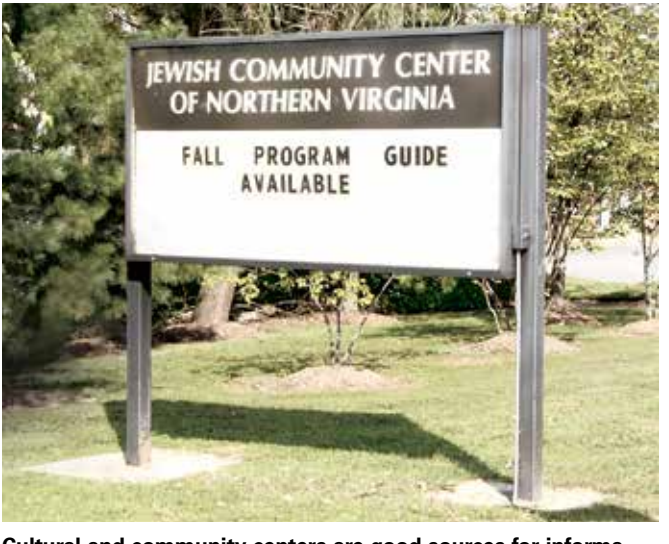
Also try these sources:

- The reference librarian at the public library can help you find the names and phone numbers of people to contact in local ethnic or religious organizations.
- People at your local chamber of commerce or city hall can put you in touch with representatives of various cultural groups who would be willing to talk with you.
- Radio, television, and newspapers announce upcoming festivals, community events, museum exhibits, and speaking engagements.
- With your parent or guardian's permission, you can search the internet for local ethnic or religious organizations and events.

Neighborhoods

Many neighborhoods and small communities are the hubs of people's lives, particularly in urban areas where people depend on buses and subways instead of cars to get around. Important activities take place in local institutions such as schools, places of worship, and community centers. Before you go to some of these places, be sure to get your parent or guardian's permission. Prepare for your visits so you can get an accurate understanding of how the institutions and activities fit into people's lives. Some questions like these might help you:

- **Neighborhood.** What is neighborhood life like? Do people visit back and forth? Do many relatives live near one another? How has the neighborhood been shaped by the cultures of the people who live there?
- **Place of worship.** How do religious beliefs and values guide people's lives or influence the life of the community? What cultural or community activities are offered by this church or other place of worship?
- **Community center.** Who goes to the community center? Is it the center of activity in the neighborhood or area, or is the church or some other institution the cultural center?



Cultural and community centers are good sources for information about the cultures you are studying.

- **School.** What subjects are taught? Do students learn the traditional songs, stories, and dances of their culture? Is language or religion taught at this school as part of a full-day curriculum, or is it presented as an after-school activity? How does the school involve the community?
- **Restaurants and grocery stores.** What kind of food does the restaurant serve? Do people of all backgrounds eat there, or does the restaurant cater mainly to people of a particular culture? Is the menu printed in more than one language? Is the grocery store a supermarket that attracts people from the whole community, or a smaller market serving an ethnic neighborhood? Who shops there? How is the ethnic market different from the grocery store where your family shops?

Cajuns are descended from French-speaking immigrants of Acadia, the former French Colony in southeastern Canada. Many settled in southern Louisiana after the British expelled them from Canada in the mid-1700s.

At a *living history museum* like this one in Williamsburg, Virginia, staff or volunteers play roles to show how people lived. Here, a costumed interpreter plays the role of an apprentice blacksmith in Colonial times.

Museums

Almost every town or city has at least one museum. Many schools, colleges, and universities own special collections of art and historical documents. Libraries and cultural arts centers often house permanent or temporary exhibits of artifacts from an ethnic group that interests you.

Nate and Devon continue their cultural explorations by visiting a museum at a nearby college that displays a collection of Japanese art that once belonged to the college's founder. The Scouts tour three rooms of sculpture, prints, and ink painting on silk. When they have seen all the exhibits, they realize they have just looked at 13 centuries of Japan's artistic traditions.

Visiting the National Scouting Museum–Philmont Scout Ranch will give you a glimpse of Scouting's heritage.

Call the museum before you go. Find out the hours of operation and what they charge for admission. Ask if you will be allowed to take photographs. Security usually is a big issue, so leave backpacks and bulky coats at home.

Social and Religious Customs

Social customs often are tied to religious customs. In a traditional Italian community, for instance, the church is the center of its social *and* religious activities. In most cultures, a wedding is both a religious and a social experience, a solemn ceremony plus a joyful celebration. The customs surrounding births and funerals also are religious as well as social.

Social customs include everyday behavior. In a classroom of children from different cultural backgrounds, an American child would typically look at a teacher who is speaking to him or her; it is a sign of respect. A Vietnamese child, however, might have been taught to look down when being addressed by the teacher, which also is a sign of respect. What misunderstandings might develop if the teacher didn't know about these differences?

Religious and social customs are extremely important in people's lives. As you discuss traditions with people of other cultures, try to understand the customs from their point of view. Be respectful.

Social or religious customs can determine:

- Roles of men and women
- Relationships among grandparents, parents, and children
- Clothing styles and dress codes
- Food choices and table manners
- Children's responsibilities or chores at home
- Parents' or guardians' views about teenage dating

Is Three a Crowd?

People in certain cultures believe it is unacceptable for young men and women to be alone together before marriage. It is the custom for a relative to accompany a young woman on her date. In a few cultures, marriages still are arranged, even in families that have lived in the United States for years.

Conversations—Sources for Information

People are your best source for information. So why not start with your own family members? Do you know who your ancestors were or where they came from? Have you heard stories about your forefathers' experiences as immigrants? Perhaps if you discover *why* your ancestors came to the United States, you'll better appreciate the struggles of people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Since Devon has been home from his trip to New York City, he has spent several hours talking with his grandmother about the traditions and customs she valued growing up in England. They enjoyed looking at family albums together, and Devon was quite relieved that he didn't damage an old photograph when he spilled his tea.

Old family photographs offer glimpses of the past and may provide significant clues about your own cultural background.

Many Americans can trace their origins back to several countries. It's common for an American to have a multicultural heritage—that is, to keep family traditions or customs that have been passed down from several cultures. Some families know a great deal about their history and preserve their heritage in daily life. Other families know very little about their backgrounds. Your family may enjoy learning with you as you explore the culture of your ancestors.

It is not necessary to research your family's background before you talk with them, but it is *very* important to do so before you talk to other people about their culture. Devon and Nate got a lot of information at their public library, so ask your reference librarian to show you where to find books about the religious and social customs of different ethnic, racial, and religious groups.

When you think you have found enough information in books and (with permission) on the internet, you are ready for the next step: preparing for the interview. The planning you do ahead of time will help to keep your conversation on track and make you and the other person feel comfortable.

Making the Most of Your Conversation

You can expect people who agree to talk with you to be friendly, proud of their cultural heritage, and happy to share their knowledge. But you will learn more if you put them at ease. Try to interview people in their homes or wherever they are likely to feel most comfortable.

- Make a list of your main questions. Keep the questions short, clear, and not too personal.
- Structure your questions so the person will give you the most information. "What did you like about growing up in the Puerto Rican community?" will get you details. "What does it mean to you to be Greek?" may prompt a long and thoughtful reply. Avoid asking questions that may be answered with a simple *yes* or *no* or other one-word response.
- When you meet the person, introduce yourself and thank him or her for taking time to talk to you.
- If a fascinating or unexpected topic comes up, ask follow-up questions before going on right away to the next question on your list.
- Listen carefully and take notes. (If you want to record the interview, ask permission *before* you begin.)
- Ask the person for permission to call again if you think of something else important.
- Thank the person when you leave.

After the interview, review your notes and fill in anything you remember but did not have time to write down. Think about what you learned. Were you surprised by how much you have in common with people from other backgrounds?

A Jewish boy reads the Torah as he prepares for his *bar mitzvah,* the ceremony in which a young man becomes fully responsible for performing the commandments of his religion.

A **bar mitzvah** is the ceremony that marks a Jewish boy's 13th birthday, which is the age of moral and spiritual responsibility.

You will discover—through your research and conversations—that people have different religious beliefs (in different degrees of commitment) or no spiritual beliefs at all. They have fought wars in the name of their religion and God (or gods) and they have filed lawsuits claiming the absence of God.

World Religions

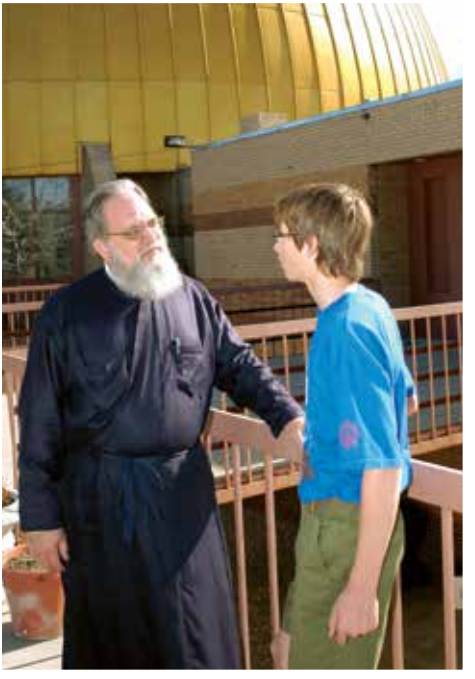
There are many different religious faiths throughout the world—a great number of which are represented at the National Scout Jamboree. You may wish to attend one of those worship services to learn more about those faiths. In addition, many of these faiths have religious emblems that Scouts can earn. Visit scouting.org to learn more about Scouting America's religious emblems program and to find one that might be available for your religion. (As always, get your parent or guardian's permission before using the internet.)

Scouts who earn the religious emblem for their faith are eligible to wear this square knot award on their official Scout uniform. While all faiths' medals look different from one another, the square knot award is the same for everyone.

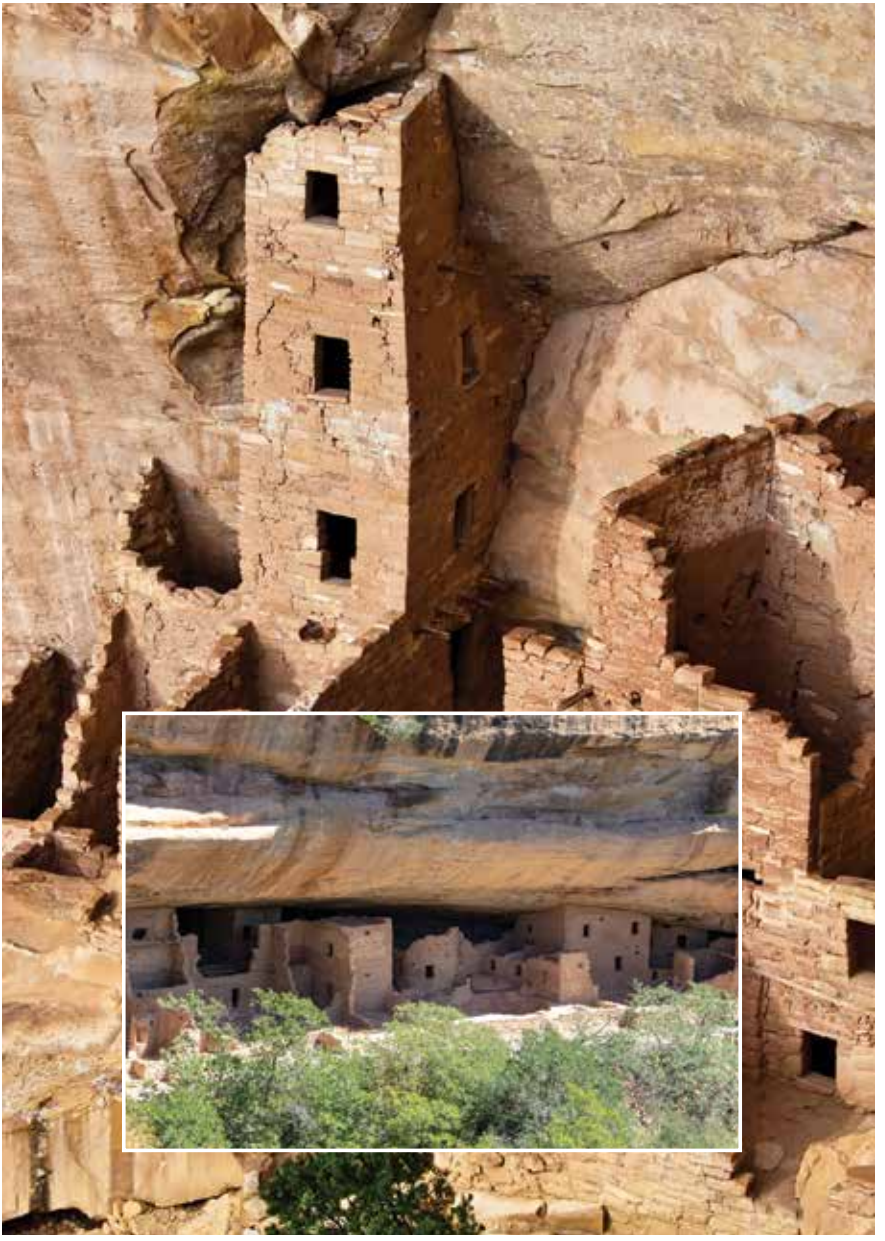
To find out more about other religions, talk with the spiritual leaders of the cultures you are studying. You will discover that each religion has certain rituals or ceremonies that recognize the same special occasions in most people's lives. Here are some questions you might ask:

- What are the important religious customs in each culture?
- Of each group's special holidays or observances, which are religious in nature? Which are social or *civil* (nonreligious)? Which commemorate important events in the group's history?
- In what ways are the culture's history and religion linked?
- How do family members take part in religion? Do both men and women participate? Do children?
- What are the customs concerning prayer?
- How does religion play a part in birth, marriage, and death? Do people celebrate major life events only in a religious setting, or also with social traditions?
- What is the role of the priest, minister, rabbi, imam, or other religious official in the community?

Devon and Nate take separate steps to find out about social and religious customs in various cultures. Devon decides to interview people in cultural and community centers. Nate asks the minister in his own church to help him organize a group meeting with religious leaders from two other faiths.



Nate asks a few questions to get the conversation started, but once the three religious leaders understand what he's after, he does not have to prod them further. They are glad to talk about the most meaningful customs and traditions of their faiths—how they differ from one another and also how they are similar. The discussion naturally touches on social customs in the religious leaders' local communities. Nate leaves the meeting with a deeper understanding of how strong the links are between a culture's religious and social customs.



The Anasazi built their homes a thousand years ago in the high cliffs of the American Southwest. Many cliff dwellers abandoned their homes about A.D. 1300, perhaps because of hostile invaders, climate changes, famine, or severe drought.

What If . . . ?

What if one of the groups you are exploring had always lived alone in a city or country—with no contact with any other groups? What do you think the city or country would be like today? What would it be like if all three of your groups lived there at the same time?

For requirement 2, you must stretch your imagination. Picture yourself in a different cultural group and imagine what your life would be like in that society if it had always been isolated from the rest of the world. In this situation, members of the community would have no technology borrowed from other groups, and no idea that other cultures exist.

Do you think the group would be hunting with spears, sheltering in caves, and wearing clothes made of leaves and tree bark? Would it be a modern society with planes, television, and video games? Or might it fall somewhere in between, a sort of medieval society with serfs and lords of the manor? What would daily life be like without the technologies of the 21st century?

On the other hand, what would life be like if the culture, in its complete isolation, shot ahead of the rest of the world and developed advanced technology such as artificial intelligence and humanlike robots? Could that happen if the group was unaware of the technologies and innovations developed by other societies?

How would people interact if they never had contact with anyone outside their group? In isolation, members of the group tend to rely heavily on each other because they have no one else to depend on. The role that each member plays is crucial to the survival of the whole group. Shared beliefs, values, and attitudes become unquestionable because no outside influences make people question the way they think and live.

The Q'ero, who inhabit remote areas of the Andes Mountains, are direct descendants of the Incas, and they still hold to many ancient Incan traditions.

Making Contact

Nate and Devon have gotten to know the reference librarian fairly well, so they ask him for information about isolated cultures. He points to a woman carrying a stack of books and tells them that she is a college professor who knows all about an isolated group in South America.

The boys introduce themselves to the professor and explain that they are working on a requirement for a Scouts BSA merit badge. Dr. Hanley agrees to sit down and tell them about the Q'ero, a small society living 17,000 feet up in the peaks of the Andes Mountains of South America. Dr. Hanley says the Q'ero are among the most socially isolated people on Earth—rarely making contact with anyone from outside their group.

But in 2000, Don Domingo and a few other Q'ero priests were invited to attend a conference in New York City. They flew to the conference on a DC-10 airliner. The Q'ero did not have planes. Don Domingo and his friends spoke Quechua (the language of the Inca Empire), but they had no word in their language for "airplane." So, they called the plane "big bird."

The plane landed at Newark Airport in New Jersey and the men were escorted to a van headed to the conference center. When their van idled in traffic, Don Domingo said to his friends, "A horse moves faster than this."

As they passed a small rocky hill alongside the highway, one of the Q'ero asked, "What is the name of this mountain?" The interpreter did not know. The Q'ero were shocked because in their culture in the high Andes, all mountains are gods. For the interpreter not to know the hill's name, the Q'ero believed, was deeply disrespectful. As the van entered the Lincoln Tunnel, Don Domingo said quietly to the others, "*Uccu Pacha*." (Translation: "We are entering the underworld.")

After hearing this story about the Q'ero, Nate and Devon found it easier to understand how isolation affects a group's culture and traditions. They also realized that once contact is made with the outside world, the isolated society would start to change, slowly adopting new ways.

During their travels in the early 1800s, explorers Lewis and Clark presented Jefferson Peace Medals to American Indian tribal leaders as a token of the understanding that both parties would maintain peaceable relationships with one another.

For most people, living on Earth requires change and adaptation. Every day we are exposed to more news, more commercial products, more entertainment, and more people with their own customs and languages. Our lives—what we believe, what we talk about, what we do, drink, eat, and wear—are constantly affected and challenged by our contact with the rest of the world.

Interacting

Now the Scouts try to imagine a world in which the three groups they are exploring freely contact each other, yet remain somewhat separate.

"They'll share things," Nate says. "Real stuff, inventions, and ideas. On some level, they'll change each other's ways and beliefs."

Devon agrees. "They'll probably create new forms of art and music by mixing their styles and traditions with other people's. You know, like the way the Japanese mixed Chinese art techniques with their own style."

"Everyone will benefit," Nate adds. "And they'll cooperate to make the best of situations that affect all three groups."

"Maybe," Devon responds, "if all the groups stay friendly with each other. But they'll probably disagree about some things. These are three different cultures, remember, and they don't do things alike. What if one group invents a weapon that scares its neighbors? Or the people in one culture do something that offends another group or violates their religious beliefs? If they're not willing or able to work out their differences, they might go to war."

Nate and Devon conclude that three groups in contact with each other are in a good position to improve the quality of life for all three—if the groups share and cooperate. To live together peacefully and productively, however, the groups must tolerate (accept) the differences among them. They must respect and value one another's culture. Otherwise they might become bitter enemies, dangerously divided by their differences.

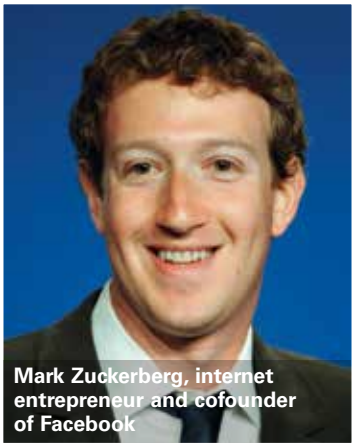
Hate crimes are motivated by intolerance of other people's religious, racial, or ethnic backgrounds. Such crimes may include vandalism, threats, harassment, or assault. Most laws against hate crimes require a tougher penalty when the victims are chosen specifically because of their race, religion, or other cultural traits.

"You know what?" Nate says. "The groups we've been talking about, the three cultures living and working together, are like a snapshot of American cultures today—except the United States has way more than three groups trying to get along."

"Yeah," Devon replies. "But sometimes we don't seem to get along. Some people resent or fear anyone who doesn't think or behave the way they do."

"Well, if you put 300 million people from hundreds of different cultural groups together in one place, you're bound to have some friction," Nate points out. "But still, our society is stronger and richer *because* of all the cultures."

"I guess the United States is like that Greek food we ate in New York—lots of different ingredients. Definitely more interesting than a plain-lettuce country."



Mark Zuckerberg, internet entrepreneur and cofounder of Facebook

Piyush "Bobby" Jindal, 55th governor of Louisiana

Jeremy Lin, National Basketball Association player

Barack Obama, 44th president of the United States

Sonia Sotomayor, associate justice, Supreme Court of the United States

America's "melting pot" of cultures offers people of all nationalities an opportunity to excel.

Outstanding Americans

Have you ever dreamed of making a great scientific discovery, finding a cure for an illness, or handling a tough problem for your country? You would feel good about your achievement. Your name would go down in history, and your family would be proud of you.

When a member of an ethnic group makes a difference in people's lives, that group feels proud, too. People from all walks of life and from all ethnic groups have made major contributions to our nation. For requirement 4, you will learn about the contributions of three great Americans from different racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds.

Do not overlook the contributions of local heroes. Ask people from different cultural groups in your community to name the individuals they admire. You may discover several local achievers—men and women who have made important contributions where you live. Read newspaper stories or listen to television reports about community leaders. You might be able to interview a local hero, an experience that will have far more meaning for you than simply reading about a famous American.

People Important to You

Our two Scouts, Devon and Nate, choose people whose contributions have touched their own lives in some way. Devon, the computer whiz, focuses on the work of:

- **Steve Jobs:** born to a Syrian father and an American mother and adopted in infancy—a leader and pioneer in the field of personal computers
- **Grace Murray Hopper:** of Scottish ancestry—a computer scientist and U.S. Navy rear admiral who directed the development of the computer programming language COBOL
- **Sergey Brin:** Russian immigrant at the age of 6—cocreator of one of the internet's largest search engines

Nate, the history buff, picks three early freedom fighters from different religious backgrounds.

- **Sgt. Benjamin B. Levy:** a Jewish American—Civil War hero who was awarded the Medal of Honor for gallantry in battle
- **Susan B. Anthony:** from a family of Quakers (members of the Religious Society of Friends)—an antislavery activist who campaigned for equal rights for all Americans, including women and former slaves
- **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.:** African American—Baptist preacher and civil rights leader who advocated nonviolent marches, protests, and demonstrations for the rights of black Americans

You can see that Devon and Nate tailored requirement 4 to their own interests, finding subjects that were personally meaningful for them. You may want to do the same.

During the 1960s, nonviolent protests supporting equal civil rights for all Americans received national attention.

Getting Along

By this point in their investigations, Nate and Devon fully realize that people from different cultural backgrounds do not always get along. Cultures often cooperate, but they often clash as well. Some conflicts are easily resolved, but others may last for years—even centuries—with no apparent solution.

It takes cooperation from all groups and individuals to work together so that we can all get along. Learning to accept people for who they are, no matter what their background, makes good sense for us all. By understanding how conflict and cooperation affect people and their behavior, we might be able to make our world a better place.

Conflict

What causes conflict? People who are struggling to reach their goals—striving for good jobs, economic advantages, and a better way of life—may find themselves competing for those things with members of other groups. Conflict often develops when people are unwilling to understand or respect another culture. Fear and mistrust between groups of people can lead to acts of hostility and violence.

In 21st-century America, we still see prejudice, discrimination, and racism. To be *prejudiced* is to have a strong attitude toward an individual or a group, without having any fair or sensible reasons for such a feeling. To *discriminate* is to treat a person or group differently because of the way they look, dress, act, or are otherwise singled out. *Racism* is prejudice and discrimination directed toward a race of people or an ethnic group.

To prepare for requirement 5, which calls for you to lead a discussion, use the contacts you have made in the three cultures you are studying. These people will be able to tell you about any local difficulties between groups as well as any efforts to cooperate and get along better.

Cultural conflicts at their worst can explode into wars, as history and the daily news show us. From around the world come reports of bloody civil wars, in which different groups of people living in the same country fight and kill one another.

Cooperation

What benefits come with cooperation? People working together can improve a community, a nation, or the world. They can tackle environmental threats and seek solutions to tough problems like terrorism and poverty.

Coalitions or alliances of people from different groups in a town or city can be powerful forces for change. In workplaces, schools, and volunteer organizations like Scouting, individuals from different backgrounds work together to achieve common goals. At the same time, they may become friends.

Giving a Talk

For requirement 5, you will talk to your Scout unit or class at school about how people from different groups have gotten along together. Plan to give examples of conflicts and cooperation in the United States from the past and the present. Are cultural groups working together in your community today?

As you prepare your talk, you may find it helpful to understand the terms that describe how ethnic groups treat each other. These practices—some healthy, and some highly destructive—may take the form of *genocide*, *segregation*, *assimilation*, or *cultural pluralism*.

Devon and Nate discovered examples of all these practices as they explored various cultural groups. Here is some of the information they passed along in their talks.

Genocide is the purposeful killing of an entire racial or ethnic group. Genocide has happened all over the world and throughout history. Less than 100 years after Europeans arrived in the Caribbean in 1492, no full-blooded natives remained in the Dominican Republic. Between 1933 and 1945, the Nazis killed more than 6 million Jews. In Rwanda in 1994, one ethnic group massacred thousands of people in other minority groups.

Segregation is the practice of physically separating groups because of race or ethnic origin. In the United States until the mid-1900s, black Americans were segregated on trains and in schools, places of worship, hotels, restaurants, theaters, and other public places. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 ordered restaurants and other businesses that serve the general public to serve all people without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin. Though forced segregation was made illegal, Americans may still voluntarily segregate themselves by custom or tradition. Many groups, institutions, and neighborhoods continue to practice segregation.

A teenager from India might wear jeans to school to be like his or her classmates, while the teen's mother and grandmother continue to dress in the traditional sari.

Assimilation occurs when minority racial or ethnic groups blend into the culture of the majority group. As they blend in, minorities may lose their own customs and traits. They may adopt the majority group's attitudes, beliefs, values, language, and behavior. Ethnic minorities may seek assimilation for economic and social advantages.

Cultural pluralism means racial and ethnic groups living together, with each group continuing to observe its own cultural traditions and respecting those of other groups. In the United States, ethnic pride is important and much emphasized. Nationwide, we celebrate Black History Month every February, St. Patrick's Day in March, and Cinco de Mayo in May. Many other racial and cultural groups also celebrate their ethnicity throughout the year.

Tolerance means accepting people just the way they are.

Leading a Discussion

The second part of requirement 5 is to lead a discussion on ways to help various groups understand one another better. For this, Nate and Devon again team up.

Nate leads off by suggesting that mutual respect is the first step toward understanding one another, and failing to show respect is a barrier to understanding. "Showing respect for another person," he tells the group, "is also a way of saying, 'You are important because you are human, and every human being deserves respect and appreciation on the basis of being a human.'" Nate encourages those taking part in the discussion to show respect for each other by being fair and open-minded.

To break the ice, Nate shares personal stories about his own experiences as a young African American. He then asks other participants to tell their stories. One Scout talks about how it feels to be a newcomer. As he speaks, other members of the group nod their heads. Several people in the group have moved to a new school, troop, town, or country. They know what it's like to be a stranger.

Nate prods them to talk about experiences that made the move easy or difficult for them. What adjustments did they make to fit into their new environment? Do their experiences help them understand how new immigrants might adjust to living in the United States?

Devon watches for members of the group who aren't participating. He urges them to talk, noting that each person's opinion and experience is as important as another's.

The Latin motto *E pluribus unum* (pronounced *ee PLUR uh buhs YOO nuhm*) appears on the Great Seal of the United States and on all U.S. coins. The words mean "out of many, one." The motto refers to the creation of one nation—the United States—out of 13 colonies. It also describes America's *multicultural* makeup. The United States is one nation composed of people from many cultural backgrounds.

The discussion moves to ideas about how the group could reach out to newcomers from various cultures and countries. Devon suggests a brainstorming session. He asks the participants to list what their schools, places of worship, or community organizations could do to improve the relationships among ethnic or cultural groups. The entire group takes part in the brainstorming, and soon they have a long list of ideas.

Devon and Nate then ask the participants to rank the suggestions in the order of their favorites to create a top 10 list. Next, they ask the group to choose the first five suggestions as action items and figure out how best to accomplish them.

Top Five Action Items

1. Have a get-together and encourage people to bring an item or a food that reflects some aspect of their cultural heritage.
2. Organize a community cleanup day, inviting people from all around the neighborhood to help pick up litter, paint fences or walls, plant flowers or trees, or otherwise improve the neighborhood for everyone.
3. Put on a neighborhood olympics in which the athletes compete under the flags of their ancestors' home countries.
4. Hold a block party or a multicultural festival or fair for people to exhibit and (if they wish) sell their folk art, pottery, rugs, baskets, foods, or other items that are traditional in their cultures.
5. Form a crew to greet and welcome new families who move into the neighborhood and to tell them about local civic and cultural activities in the community.

"Every ethnic and racial group needs to express and celebrate their cultural uniqueness because they, like different instruments in an orchestra, make distinctive and enriching contributions to the whole.

"But also, as a Korean American, I feel strongly that, like an instrument in an orchestra, each group and each person should listen to one another and work together for the common good. Each person should actively participate in the life of the community and make a contribution to making our community a harmonious and better place to live."

—Sunok Chun Pai, an elder at Kansas City (Missouri) Korean Church

American Cultures: One World, Many Nations

Nate and Devon have completed their work for the American Cultures merit badge. And they had a blast! They met musicians, artists, and weavers. They tasted Czech pastries, sushi, and dolmas. They learned new songs and age-old folktales. And they widened their views of the world—a world of many nations in their own community.

In the United States, all citizens are Americans—people of different stripes. We have come together from different cultures, different countries, and different faiths. The diversity and the blended talents and ideas enrich America and shape it into a greater country. As a nation, the United States is still evolving. What we are and will become depends on every one of us.

We Americans have much work still to do to build greater understanding among all ethnic groups and all people who live in our uniquely diverse country. Our continuing challenge is to preserve our different cultural heritages, yet unite to solve problems and improve our quality of life.

Each of us must resolve to do our part to bring about peace. Cultural understanding begins with simple respect and a willingness to be friendly. If everyone made the effort you have made while earning this merit badge to connect with people of different backgrounds, America would be a stronger and fairer place.

On my honor I will do my best!

As Americans, we are all free to preserve our cultures. Since we have this freedom, we also must respect the rights of others to be different from us and to practice their own customs.

Resources

Scouting Literature

American Heritage, American Labor, Archaeology, Architecture, Citizenship in the Community, Citizenship in the Nation, Citizenship in the World, Communication, Family Life, Genealogy, Indian Lore, Law, Music and Bugling, Reading, Scouting Heritage, and *Stamp Collecting* merit badge pamphlets

With your parent or guardian's permission, visit Scouting America's official retail site, **scoutshop.org**, for a complete list of merit badge pamphlets and other helpful Scouting materials and supplies.

Books

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Bode, Janet. *The Colors of Freedom: Immigrant Stories.* Franklin Watts, 2000.

———. *New Kids in Town: Oral Histories of Immigrant Teens.* Scholastic, 1995.

Budhos, Marina Tamar. *Remix: Conversations With Immigrant Teenagers.* Henry Holt, 1999.

Chelsea House Publishers. *The Immigrant Experience.* Separate books on American Indians, Puerto Ricans, and Czech, Greek, Jewish, Mexican, Polish, and other Americans.

———. *Immigrants in America.* A six-book series telling the stories of the Chinese, German, Irish, Italian, Japanese, and Swedish Americans through immigrants' own words and contemporary photographs and illustrations.

———. *Junior Library of American Indians.* A series of 23 books covering American Indian tribes.

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Hall, Loretta, Anan Ameri, and Dawn Ramey, eds. *Arab American Encyclopedia.* Gale, 1999.

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Mareno, Barry, ed. *Coming to America.* Barron's. Separate titles on African, Irish, Italian, and Jewish Americans.

———. *We Came to America.* Mason Crest. Sixteen books depicting the unique challenges facing various ethnic groups as they came to the New World.

Mason Crest Publishers. *North American Indians Today.* Fifteen books on modern-day American Indians, from Apache and Cherokee to Seminole and Sioux.

Meltzer, Milton. *Bound for America: The Story of the European Immigrants.* Benchmark Books, 2001.

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Strom, Yale. *Quilted Landscapes: Conversations With Young Immigrants.* Simon & Schuster, 1996.

Takaki, Ronald T. *Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans.* Little, Brown, 1989.

Telushkin, Joseph. *The Golden Land: The Story of Jewish Immigration to America*. Harmony, 2002.

Thomas, David Hurst. *The Native Americans: An Illustrated History.* Turner, 1993.

Warren, Paula Stuart. *Your Guide to the Family History Library*. Betterway Books, 2001.

Organizations and Websites

Use the websites listed here as starting points for your research, or find information on particular cultures by searching for "_____ Americans" (replacing the blank with the ancestry group of interest, such as Cambodian, Pakistani, Welsh, etc.). Be sure to get your parent or guardian's permission before you begin to surf.

American Indian Studies
csulb.edu/colleges/cla/departments/ais

America's Story From America's Library
The Library of Congress
americaslibrary.gov

Arab American Institute
1600 K St. NW, Suite 601
Washington, DC 20006
Telephone: 202-429-9210
aaiusa.org

Asian-Nation
asian-nation.org

Digital History
digitalhistory.uh.edu

Immigration: Stories of Yesterday and Today
teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration

Jewish-American History Foundation
P.O. Box 760325
Lathrup Village, MI 48076
jewish-history.com

The Statue of Liberty–Ellis Island Foundation Inc.
Attention: History Center
17 Battery Place, Suite 210
New York, NY 10004-3507
Telephone: 212-561-4588
ellisisland.org

Test of Courage
Public Broadcasting Service
pbs.org/itvs/testofcourage/diversity4.html

U.S. Census Bureau
4700 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC 20233
census.gov

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