The Dutch Influence in New Netherland

Students read about, and watch video segments about, the Dutch influence in New Netherland. Then they identify Dutch cultural traits that endured to become part of American culture today.

**GRADES**

9 - 12+

**SUBJECTS**

Geography, Human Geography, Social Studies, World History

**CONTENTS**

2 Links, 1 Video

**OVERVIEW**

Students read about, and watch video segments about, the Dutch influence in New Netherland. Then they identify Dutch cultural traits that endured to become part of American culture today.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Have students read about how Dutch colonists in New Netherland affected the Native Americans who already lived there.

Explain to students that culture is a group’s way of life. The movement of different groups impacts the cultural landscapes of both the places they leave and the places they settle. The Dutch colonists impacted the lives of the Native Americans who were already settled in the
Hudson River Valley. Project the website The Hudson: The River That Defined America. Click on “Dutch Settlement” and invite volunteers to read each paragraph aloud. Also have students read the information included in each of the clickable markers on the map. Ask:

- **How did the Dutch colonists and the Native Americas become dependent on one another?** (The natives hunted and delivered fur pelts for the Dutch. They traded these for the tools, cloth, weapons, and alcohol the Dutch imported.)
- **How did the Dutch presence negatively affect the Native American population?** (The settlers brought diseases to which the natives had no immunity. There were also armed conflicts between the Dutch and the Native Americans and between the different Native American groups, caused by uneven trade agreements with the Dutch.)

### 2. Introduce the terms *cultural markers* and *cultural diffusion*.

Explain to students that every region has unique characteristics, or *cultural markers*, that distinguish it from other places. The Dutch colonists impacted the cultural landscape of the Hudson River Valley in ways that include its *ethnic* makeup, spoken languages, religious institutions, traditions, architectural styles, and other cultural markers. Explain that *cultural diffusion* is the spread of elements from one culture to another. Ask: **What elements of Dutch culture do you think are still part of American life today?** Have students use the list of cultural markers from Dutch colonists to brainstorm ideas.

### 3. Show students the video segment “New Amsterdam, Diversity and Opportunity.”

Show students the video segment “New Amsterdam, Diversity and Opportunity.” Ask students to jot notes on the three terms and phrases used in the video to describe the culture of the Dutch colony. Ask:

- **What terms and phrases are used in the video to describe the culture of the Dutch colony in the 17th century?** (multicultural, melting pot, middle class)
- **Which of those terms do you think describe American culture today?** Explain.

Have students do a word association activity. Write *multicultural, melting pot*, and *middle class* on the board. Ask students to brainstorm words and phrases that describe a culture with those descriptors. Prompt them to include answers such as: opportunity, *diversity*, tolerance, and educated.

### 4. Introduce and show the video segment “Dutch Cultural Transition.”

Tell students that the Dutch *colony* became an English colony in 1664; however, approximately
90% of the Dutch settlers stayed and continued to affect the cultural landscape. Explain that the next video, “Dutch Cultural Transition,” is about that time. Ask students to write notes as they watch on the traits of Dutch culture they hear about. Ask:

- What are some traits of Dutch culture that are highlighted? (landowners; women were equal to men and could inherit land, money, and businesses; religious tolerance; architecture; love of flowers and tulips; love of art and painting)
- Which of those traits are part of American culture today? Explain.

Informal Assessment

Have students work independently to write definitions of terms cultural markers and cultural diffusion, and give examples of each from the 17th century and today.

OBJECTIVES

Subjects & Disciplines

Geography
- Human Geography
Social Studies
- World History

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- describe the influence of Dutch colonists on the Native American population
- describe the culture of the Dutch colony in the 17th century
- identify traits of Dutch culture that are part of American culture today

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods
Discussions
Multimedia instruction
Reading
Visual instruction

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- Critical Thinking Skills
  - Analyzing
  - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
  - Answering Geographic Questions

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- **Standard 9:**
The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth’s surface

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HISTORY

- **U.S. History Era 2 (5-12) Standard 1:**
  Why the Americas attracted Europeans, why they brought enslaved Africans to their colonies, and how Europeans struggled for control of North America and the Caribbean

- **U.S. History Era 2 (5-12) Standard 2:**
  How political, religious, and social institutions emerged in the English colonies

- **World History Era 6 (5-12) Standard 4:**
  Economic, political, and cultural interrelations among peoples of Africa, Europe, and the Americas, 1500-1750

Preparation

What You’ll Need
MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE

- Paper
- Pencils
- Pens

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per classroom, Projector, Speakers
- Plug-Ins: Flash

PHYSICAL SPACE

- Classroom

GROUPING

- Large-group instruction

BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

Background Information

The heritage of the United States includes an influential 17th century Dutch colony. Dutch history in America is only now being rediscovered as historians translate thousands of documents from 17th century Dutch to English. What those documents reveal is that the diversity of the United States today has origins in a Dutch past.

Prior Knowledge

Recommended Prior Activities

- Diversity in New York Place Names
- Mapping Diversity in Old and New Netherland
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Part of Speech</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>colony</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>people and land separated by distance or culture from the government that controls them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultural diffusion</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>the spread of cultural characteristics from one culture to another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultural landscape</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>human imprint on the physical environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultural marker</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>unique characteristic of a community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>culture</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>learned behavior of people, including their languages, belief systems, social structures, institutions, and material goods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diversity</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>difference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnic</td>
<td>adjective</td>
<td>having to do with characteristics of a group of people linked by shared culture, language, national origin, or other marker.</td>
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</tbody>
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For Further Exploration

Interactives

- The Hudson: The River That Defined America

Websites

- WNET: Thirteen—Dutch New York: Rediscover 400 Years of History