Introduction

When looking at a world map, students will probably realize that Asia is a huge continent, but it may not be obvious to them that this continent has exceptional human diversity. The purpose of this lesson is to get students to understand that although Asia is often discussed as a single entity ("Asian people"), it's really a combination of many different human cultures. The Extension section recommends that students look at Asia's diversity in physical geography, but the main part of this lesson focuses on human diversity.

This lesson can also be applied to Africa (language and religious diversity) or Europe (language diversity).

Time Frame: 3-4 class periods

Objectives and Standards

Students will:

• Mark specified Asian countries on an outline map.
• Record the languages spoken and religions practiced in each of these countries.
• Create posters depicting Asia's language and religious diversity.

National Social Studies Standards:

• 1: Culture: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.
• 3: People, Places, and Environments: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.
• 9: Global Connections: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence.

National Geography Standards:

• 1: How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
• 4: The physical and human characteristics of places.
• 10: The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

Maps and Materials Needed

Materials Needed:
• Asia Outline Map:  
  http://www.maps101.com/index.php?option=com_flexicontent&view=items&id=1818:asia&cid=120:outline (one copy for each student; download and print the PDF file)
• Large pieces of poster paper (one for each group)
• Crayons or colored pencils
• Glue or paste

Additional Map Resources Used:
• World Reference Atlas:  

Procedure

1. Ask if anyone in the classroom is from Asia or has ancestors or relatives from Asia. Ask those students to tell the class which country or countries their family is from and to share a little bit of their knowledge of that country with the class.
3. Ask each group to use the World Reference Atlas (http://www.maps101.com/index.php?option=com_flexicontent&view=items&id=3346:world&cid=8:reference-atlas) to locate the following countries and to then label the countries on their outline maps (for less advanced students, or if you're worried about time constraints, you can shorten this list):
   • Vietnam
   • Japan
   • China
   • Indonesia
   • Philippines
   • Bhutan
   • Mongolia
   • India
   • Turkey
   • Iran
   • Kazakhstan
   • Israel
4. Have students look at the Statistics section for each of these countries and, on their handouts, write the religions and languages that are spoken.
5. Have groups look carefully at the table in their handout and answer the questions in section 2 of the handout (counting the languages and religions in Asia).
6. Give each group a large piece of poster paper, and ask them to divide the paper into sections so that there's enough room to paste an outline map in the middle of the poster and to place a small picture and two or three lines of written text for each of the countries on the above list. They will therefore have twelve sections surrounding the outline map.
7. In each section of their poster, have groups write the name of one of the countries, draw a picture of a child of about their own age, and write a sentence or two that the child would be saying, stating the language and religion that the child speaks and practices (obviously, your
students should write the sentences in English). They should choose the most commonly spoken languages and the most commonly practiced religions in each country (these would be the first languages and religions on their lists for each country). If there's time, have students look for additional resources in the library or on the Internet to find out what people tend to look like and what they might wear in each country, and have them add these details to their drawings. If any of your students are from one of the countries or have ancestors from one of the countries, they may want to share with the class additional information about life in that country so that students can add this information to their posters.

8. Have groups paste one of their outline maps into the middle of the poster, indicating the countries that are represented on the poster.

9. Display the posters around the classroom, and discuss with the class the diversity of people on the Asian continent.

Assessment Suggestions

Check to make sure that students have:

• Participated cooperatively in their groups.
• Accurately marked the Asian countries on their maps.
• Correctly listed the languages and religions.
• Correctly counted the languages and religions.
• Followed directions to create colorful posters that include all the requested information.

Extension

Have students research and discuss the languages and religions that they've included on their posters. What do the languages look like when written? What are some basic tenets of the religions? If any of your students speak the languages or practice the religions, ask them to share their knowledge with the class.

You can also have students continue their study of Asian diversity by concentrating on the continent's physical geography. Have them find out what the landscape and climate are like in different parts of the continent, and then have them examine the ways in which people have adapted to this diverse geography.

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2. Now look at your list of languages and religions, and answer these questions:

   a) How many different languages are spoken in Asia? Does this seem like a lot of languages?

   b) How many different religions are practiced in Asia? Does this seem like a lot of religions?