

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
SECONDARY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME

GRADE SEVEN (7)
WEEK 12 LESSON ONE (1)

SOCIAL STUDIES

Topic: A Glimpse of Our History.

Sub-Topic: Cultural Heritage

Objectives:

- Define the term cultural heritage
- State why we have a rich cultural heritage
- Identify the contributions our ancestors made

Concept: We must appreciate the culture of the different groups and show love for one another.

Content:

Our Guyanese society has a rich cultural heritage due to our six ethnic groups having different:

1. Customs
2. Dress
3. Festivals
4. Traditions
5. Architecture
6. Music
7. Food

Cultural Heritage

The cultural heritage of the Guyanese people is derived from the beliefs and practices of the six ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has made a significant contribution towards the cultural heritage of Guyana by way of their foods, dress and folk customs.

Contributions Of Amerindian To Our Cultural Heritage.

Amerindians are an interesting group of people who have made significant contributions towards the history of Guyana. They have given our country its name. Guyana is an Amerindian word,

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which means land of many waters. Many creeks, rivers and mountains have Amerindian names. They maintain close links with nature and they can tell the time by the movements of the moon, sun and tides. From the environment, they receive sustenance as well as inspiration. Our culture is enriched with many of their myths, legends, poems, songs and stories.

In Guyana, we observe September, as Amerindian Heritage Month. At this time there are several exhibitions and cultural displays to enable the rest of the nation to take some time off to reflect on the many ways by which these have enriched our culture.

In 1994, the United Nations launched “The Decade of the World’s Indigenous People”.

(1994 – 2004). This launching was to pay tribute to the millions of native peoples or tribes scattered throughout the Americas and other parts of the world. The indigenous people are making every effort to become integrated with the rest of the population and assume a new role as decision-makers.

It is hoped that as Amerindians seek to participate in national and regional developmental activities that the governments will co-operate and consult with them in planning, implementing and evaluating these developmental projects that would affect their lives.

The Contributions of the Europeans to Guyanese Culture

The coming of the Europeans had a lasting effect on Guyana. During the Dutch occupation, slave labour was used in the sugar cane fields and factories. Canals were dug using slave labour, the polder system was introduced and drainage, irrigation and transportation were developed.

There are streets and places which have European names; such as Stabroek, Zeeburg and Nova Zeelandia. (Dutch)

La Repentir and La Bonne Intention. (French)

Georgetown and Queenstown. (English).

The sugar industry to which the economy of Guyana is linked was established through the efforts of the Europeans who sought to meet the demand for sugar in Europe during the 17th century. The profits from slavery helped to make Europe prosperous.

Some of our historic buildings today reveal European architectural features e.g. porches, high towers, wooden shutters, massive columns, etc.

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Our historic buildings include the Stabroek Market, St. George's Cathedral, The High Court.

The Dutch modelled our early system of government with the Court of Policy, The Combined Court and The College of Keizers. The other European powers found the Dutch model convenient and adopted it. It was not until 1891 that the English introduced constitutional changes.

Guyana's official language "English" is a legacy from our English rulers. Christianity was the religion of the slave masters and many of the Negroes became converted. An observation of the dress and way of life of Guyanese reveals features containing a mixture of European culture. Today there is a very small percentage of Europeans still residing in Guyana but evidence of their presence still exists.

The Contributions Of The Africans To Our Cultural Heritage

Like the other ethnic groups, the Africans have made significant contributions towards the development of Guyanese culture. Afro-Guyanese holds offices in the public as well as in the private sector of society. Many are public servants, teachers, lawyers, doctors and magistrates. African cultural practices are incorporated into the Guyanese tradition. Among these is the Queh-Queh Dance, which is usually performed on the eve of a wedding.

African foods form part of the Guyanese cuisine e.g. Foo Foo, Coo Coo, Conkie, Cook Up and Pone. Anansi stories form part of our folklore. Dashiki gowns, shirts and turbans are the African traditional dress, which is still worn on special occasions by Afro-Guyanese. The throwing of the "box" which enables the Africans to purchase items, which they would have taken a long time to obtain on their own resources, was adopted. Slavery taught the N

Portuguese Contribution to Our Cultural Heritage

The Portuguese are now a minority group in Guyana. They have excelled in the field of business but also did well in other economic enterprises. They did not maintain much of their cultural identity as many of them intermarried with other ethnic groups. Mr Peter D'Aguiar former businessman and politician descended from this group. Portuguese foods are also popularly used by Guyanese. Examples of these are wines (Correia's), garlic pork and a variety of pastries and cakes.

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Activity

1. Create a scrapbook with the different contributions our ancestors made.

Homework

1. Use the scrapbook you have created to educate persons in your community about the various contributions our ancestors made.

Reference

1. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-school-community-definition-members.html>
2. Ministry of Education Social Studies teacher's guide level 7 pages 45 to 47
3. Ministry of Education Curriculum guide page 6
4. New Horizon in Social Studies book 7 pages 98 to 99