







Food as Culture: Black-Eyed Peas and African-American History

Overview:




Students will learn about an important crop that came to America with the slaves during the Columbian Exchange.

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

-  **Identify** plants and animals traded between West Africa and the Americas.
-  **Explain** how traditional foods of the African slaves influenced American culture.
-  **Name** crops that originated in North America.
-  **Give** some examples of crops that came from other parts of the world.


Materials:

-  Handout: “Where Does our Food Come From?”
-  Visual Aid: “Food Origins Map”
-  Bowl of dried black-eyed peas



On the Board:


-  Student Reflection Questions



Suggested Snack:

-  Hoppin’ John: <http://www.myrecipes.com/recipe/smoky-hoppin->

Vocabulary:

 jambalaya
 gumbo

 native
 originate

 cuisine
 black-eyed peas

Preparation:

-  Preview the handout.
-  Prepare small cups/containers of black eyed-peas for demonstration.

Learning Activities:

- I. Warm-Up (5 min.)
 - A. Ask students to think of a food that is really important to their family. This could be something they eat on special occasions, one that always makes them feel better when they are sick, or one that is endowed with family history.
 - B. Ask them to think of where the food comes from. Is it from a certain part of the world? Is it part of their cultural heritage? Their religion? Something else?

- C. Have students share their foods and origins and write them on the board.
2. Presentation: Black-Eyed Peas and African-American Culture (20 min.)
- A. Tell students that food is an important part of every culture. It can represent shared history, traditions, customs and values. Food was an important way for slaves to remember their heritage when they were far from home in America and were treated horribly.
- B. Many dishes came to America through the slave trade and eventually became part of Southern food. They were found in the earliest cookbooks written by Southern Americans.
- C. These dishes include: jambalaya (mixed rice, meat, and vegetables), feijoada (black beans and meat), gumbo (a stew of meat or shellfish, celery, bell peppers, onions, and okra), and hopping johns (black-eyed peas). These dishes originated in West African countries such as Senegal, Nigeria, Guinea, and Benin.
- Crops brought directly from Africa during the transatlantic slave trade include rice, okra, tania (a root vegetable), black-eyed peas, and kidney and lima beans. They were consumed by Africans on board slave ships on the way to the Americas and the Caribbean islands. Other crops brought from Africa included peanuts (which were native to South America), millet, sorghum, guinea melon, watermelon, yams, and sesame.
 - Black-eyed peas were first brought to the Americas as food for slaves. The crop first arrived in Jamaica around 1675, spreading throughout the West Indies, and finally reaching Florida by 1700, North Carolina in 1738 and Virginia by 1775. By the time of the American Revolution, black-eyed peas were firmly a part of American cuisine.
 - In 1791, George Washington wrote that "pease" (black-eyed peas) were rarely grown in Virginia. The next year, he brought 40 bushels of seeds to plant at his plantation. Soon black-eyed peas became a popular crop all over the South. George Washington later dubbed them "cornfield peas" because they were often planted between rows of corn.
 - Black-eyed peas are highly nutritious and full of protein. Mixing them with rice actually creates a complete protein. Eating black-eyed peas provided good nutrition for slaves who often had to do very difficult manual labor.
 - Having extra black-eyed peas on hand at the new year, was a sign of prosperity. Today, black-eyed peas are still served on New Year's in many African-American homes.
- D. Pass around dried black-eyed peas so students can see what they look like. Ask if anyone has ever eaten them.

- E. Tell students that many of the foods we eat today actually came originally from a different part of the world.
3. Garden Activity: Identifying Native Crops (15 min.)
 - A. Give students 10 minutes to walk through the garden and ask them to mentally note what plants they think are native to California and which they think came from somewhere else.
 - B. When they return, create two columns and list their answers on the board.
 - C. Distribute the Handout: "Where Does our Food Come From?"
 - D. Have students fill out the handout. If time allows, discuss their answers with the class.
4. Snack: Hoppin' John (5 min.)
 - A. Tell students that this is a dish made of black-eyed peas that are often served on New Year's as a symbol of good luck. Corn bread and greens (their snack from an upcoming lesson) are often served as well. Some say that the peas represent coins and the greens represent dollar bills, as good luck is often associated with wealth.
5. Have students answer the Reflection Questions in their garden journals. (5 min.)

Student Reflection Questions:

1. What is one food that you can't live without that actually isn't native to North America?
2. If you were traveling to a new country and could only bring one crop or kind of food with you, what would it be?

Assessment Questions:

1. What do black-eyed peas symbolize on New Years?
 - A. Bad Luck
 - B. Good health
 - C. **Good Luck**
 - D. Eternal love
2. List three crops that originated in North America.
 - **Blueberries**
 - **Strawberries**
 - **Cranberries**
 - **Grapes**
 - **Pumpkin**
 - **Turkey**

- Amaranth
- Sunflowers

Standards:

Common Core State Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Acknowledgements:

Parts of this lesson were adapted from:

Ghanian Black-Eyed Peas. The Edible Schoolyard.

<https://edibleschoolyard.org/resource/k7-7-ghanaian-black-eyed-peas-esyb>

Food Origins Map from: "A Map Of Where Your Food Originated May Surprise You." The Salt: What's on Your Plate.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2016/06/13/481586649/a-map-of-where-your-food-originated-may-surprise-you>



Where Does our Food Come From?

Name: _____ Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Use the map on the back of this page to answer the following questions.

List six crops native to North America.

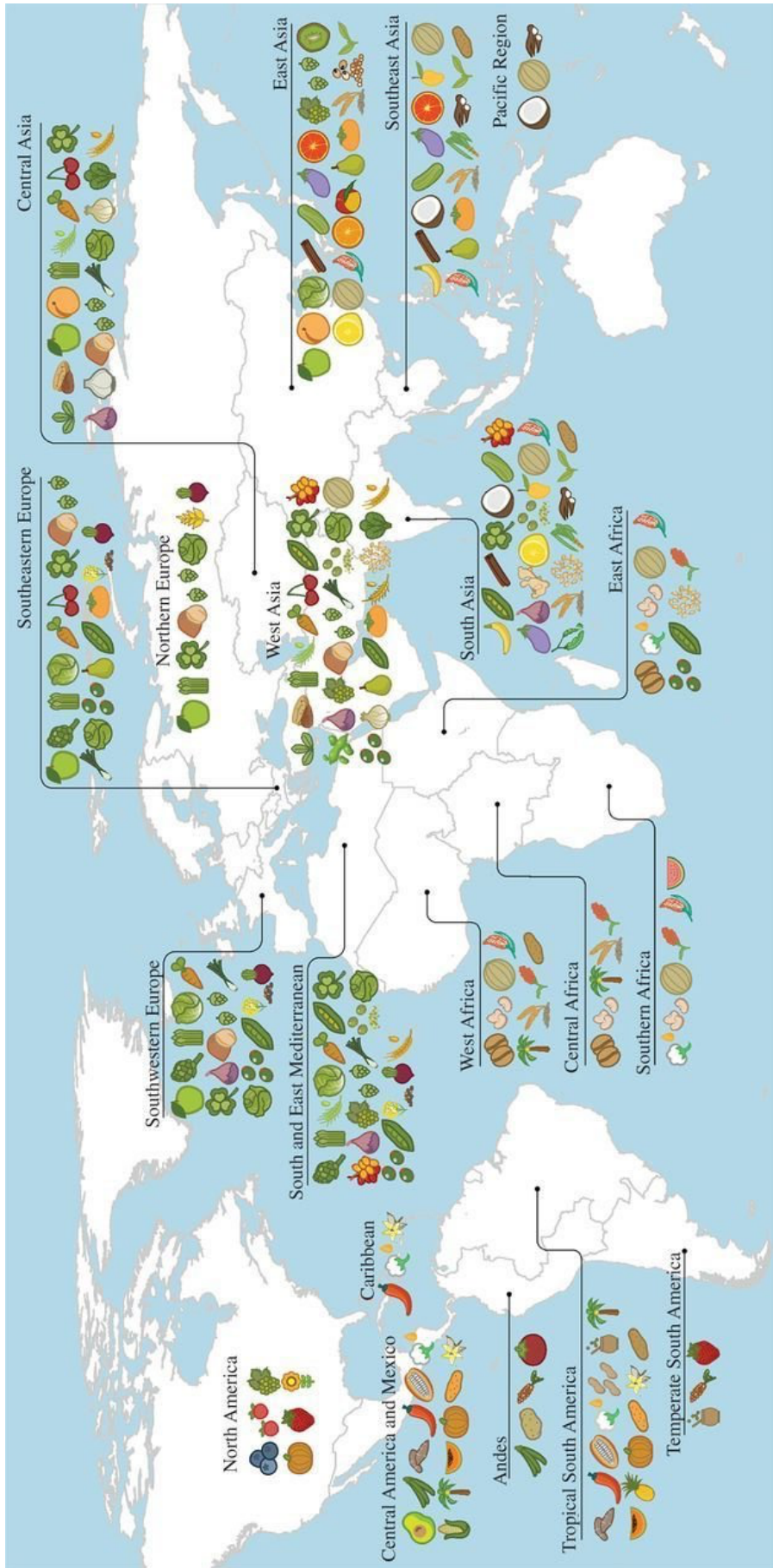
List your favorite fruit. _____

Where did it come from? _____

List one food you assumed was native to North America that actually isn't.

Where did it actually originate? _____

List something else that surprised you after reviewing this map.



- alfalfa
 - beans
 - eggplants
 - hops
 - melons
 - pears
 - peas
 - pineapples
 - plums
 - potatoes
 - pumpkins
 - quinoa
 - rape and mustard seed
 - sunflower
 - sweet potatoes
 - taro
 - tea
 - tomatoes
 - vanilla
 - watermelons
 - wheat
 - yams
-
- rice
 - rye
 - sesame
 - sorghum
 - soybean
 - spinach
 - strawberries
 - sugar beet
 - sugarcane
-
- apples
 - apricots
 - artichokes
 - asparagus
 - avocados
 - bananas and plantains
 - barley
 - chickpeas
 - chillies and peppers
 - cinnamon
 - cucumbers
 - dates
 - figs
 - garlic
 - ginger
 - grapefruit
 - grapes
 - groundnut
 - hazelnuts
 - kiwi
 - leeks
 - lemons and limes
 - lentils
 - lettuce
 - maize
 - mangoes
 - mate
 - millet
 - oats
 - olives
 - onions
 - oranges
 - palm oil
 - papayas
 - peaches and nectarines