

Unit 4: Changing Lands, Changing Lives
4th Grade Humanities
35 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

Essential Questions

- How do the cultural and environmental characteristics of places in the United States change over time?
- What factors influence where people settle and how communities grow in different parts of the United States?
- How do communities keep their cultural traditions alive, and how do those traditions change over time?

Enduring Understandings with Unit Goals

EU 1: The cultural and environmental characteristics of places in the United States are constantly changing due to natural processes and human activity.

- Identify and describe ways physical environments (e.g., forests, coastlines, farmland) have changed over time in different U.S. regions.
- Explain how population growth, land use, industry, and cultural influence contribute to environmental and community change.
- Examine how cultural characteristics evolve over time while still preserving important traditions.

EU 2: People settle in places based on access to natural resources, geography, and opportunities for work, safety, and community.

- Analyze how geographic features and natural resources influence where and how people live.
- Investigate how transportation networks, trade, and digital infrastructure affect the movement of people, goods, and ideas.
- Explore how political, social, and economic conditions—such as safety, job opportunities, or conflict—influence migration and settlement patterns.

EU 3: Cultural communities in the United States maintain and adapt their traditions over time, enriching the places where they settle.

- Explain how cultural enclaves form and contribute to the identity of regions (e.g., Little Haiti in Miami, Koreatown in Los Angeles).
- Explore how cultural traditions are preserved, shared, and adapted within new environments.
- Evaluate how primary and secondary sources—such as oral histories, monuments, and written records—help us understand community heritage and change.

Standards

CT Social Studies Frameworks Standards:

- **4.Geo.5. a.:** Explain how cultural and environmental characteristics of places change over time in the United States (e.g., population diversity, deforestation, urban sprawl, industrialization, land use).
- **4.Geo.7. a.:** Explain the environmental and cultural characteristics that shape the movement of people, goods, and ideas in United States regions (e.g., waterways, trade routes, highways, digital infrastructure).

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- **4.Geo.8. a.:** Explain how human settlement and movement relates to the availability of natural resources in a region (e.g., fisheries, mining, arable land, access to water for transportation).
- **4.Geo.6. a.:** Describe how economic, social, and political factors influence migration and population distribution throughout the United States (e.g., El Salvadorian, Guatemalan, Honduran, Haitian, Nigerian, Filipino, and Indian emigration).
- **4.His.5. a.:** Explain how push and pull factors influence the development of cultural enclaves in the United States (e.g., Little Mogadishu in Minneapolis, Little Saigon in San Jose, Little Albania in the Bronx, Koreatown in Los Angeles, Little Haiti in Miami, Park Street in Hartford, Borough Park in Brooklyn).
- **4.His.9. a.:** Summarize how different kinds of sources can be used to understand the settlement and resettlement of individuals and groups (e.g., census records, diary entries, oral histories, monuments, secondary sources).
- **4.Geo.5. b.:** Explain how the cultural characteristics of communities in a particular place are sustained and evolve over time (e.g., Taos Pueblo, South Side Neighborhood in Chicago).
- **4.Inq.1. a.:** Explain why compelling questions about a United States region are important to others (e.g., peers, adults).
- **4.Inq.1. b.:** Explain how supporting questions help answer compelling questions in an inquiry about a United States region.
- **4.Inq.1. c.:** Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration the different opinions people have about how to answer the question.
- **4.Inq.2. a.:** Apply disciplinary knowledge and practices to demonstrate an understanding of United States geography content.
- **4.Inq.3. a.:** Gather relevant information from multiple sources about an event or issue in a United States region.
- **4.Inq.3. b.:** Identify evidence response to a compelling question while determining among fact and opinion to determine the credibility of multiple sources.
- **4.Inq.3. c.:** Use evidence to develop claims in response to a compelling question by using evidence related to the geography of a United States region.
- **4.Inq.4. a.:** Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources about a United States region.
- **4.Inq.4. b.:** Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details with relevant information and data.
- **4.Inq.4. c.:** Critique arguments and explanations.
- **4.Inq.4. d.:** Present a summary of arguments and explanations with relevant information about a person, event, or issue in a United States region using print, oral, and digital technologies (e.g., reasoning, correct sequence, examples, data, details).
- **4.Inq.4. e.:** Explain the challenges and opportunities, both present and past, in addressing local, regional, and global problems in a United States region.
- **4.Inq.4. f.:** Use a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to evaluate and implement strategies to address problems in classrooms and schools.

Common Core State Standards:

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1:** Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

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- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2:** Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.4:** Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a grade 4 topic or subject area.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.9:** Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.a:** Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.b:** Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.c:** Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g., another, for example, also, because).
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.d:** Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.e:** Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.5:** With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.6:** With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.7:** Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.8:** Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information and provide a list of sources.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1.a:** Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1.b:** Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1.c:** Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.

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- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1.d:** Review the key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.2:** Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud, or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.3:** Identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.4:** Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

ISAAC Vision of the Graduate Competencies

Competency 1: Write effectively for a variety of purposes.

Competency 2: Speak to diverse audiences in an accountable manner.

Competency 3: Develop the behaviors needed to interact and contribute with others on a team.

Competency 4: Analyze and solve problems independently and collaboratively.

Competency 5: Be responsible, creative, and empathetic members of the community.

Unit Content Overview

1. Cultural and Environmental Characteristics

- Explore how both the natural environment and cultural aspects of different places in the United States change over time.
- Analyze how environmental features like forests, coastlines, and farmland have been altered due to human activities such as deforestation, urban development, and industrialization.
- Investigate how population growth and immigration affect the cultural diversity of regions.
- Use maps, timelines, and visual media to trace changes and draw connections between past and present.

2. People Settle in Places Based on Access to Needs

- Examine the reasons people move and settle in different regions across the United States, both historically and today.
- Explore how natural resources (like fertile soil, water, minerals, and fisheries), geographic features (rivers, coastlines, mountains), and infrastructure (highways, ports, internet access) shape where people live, work, and build communities.
- Investigate how goods and ideas travel through transportation routes and digital infrastructure.
- Determine how events like droughts, job opportunities, or war influence population shifts.

3. Cultural Communities Maintain and Adapt their Traditions Over Time

- Determine how immigrant and cultural communities preserve and evolve their traditions as they settle in new environments.
- Explore push and pull factors behind migration.
- Examine how cultural enclaves such as Little Saigon (San Jose) or Koreatown (Los Angeles) are formed.
- Use primary sources like oral histories, photographs, census records, and community monuments, to explore the richness and resilience of cultural identity in the U.S.

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- Reflect on the ways traditions change while maintaining strong roots in the cultures of origin, and how this contributes to the unique identity of American regions.

Vocabulary and Key Terms: environment, land use, deforestation, urban sprawl, industrialization, natural resources, waterway, region, settlement, transportation, infrastructure, migration, trade route, population distribution, geographic features, push factors, pull factors, immigration, emigration, resettlement, community, enclave, cultural group, opportunity, political factors, economic factors, social factors, displacement, tradition, cultural characteristics, cultural change, heritage, identity, custom, community growth, cultural preservation, diversity, assimilation, multicultural, primary source, secondary source, oral history, census, monument, diary entry, photograph, artifact, historical record, timeline, map

Interdisciplinary Connection:

- ELA, Science

Daily Learning Objectives with *TWPS*

Students will be able to...

- Describe how cities and towns grow and change over time. ****
 - *Why do some towns grow into cities while others stay small or disappear?*
 - *How does the environment in the Midwest differ from the Southwest, and why do those differences matter to the people who live there?*
 - *What makes a community “cultural,” and how can we see culture in the places we live?*
 - *What happens when natural features are removed or changed by people?*
- Examine the effects of urban sprawl and industrialization on the environment.
 - *Should people be able to build wherever they want, even if it harms nature? Why or why not?*
- Explore how deforestation changes landscapes and communities.
 - *What are the trade-offs between using natural resources and protecting the environment?*
- Analyze how farming and land use shape a region over time.
 - *How do the ways we use land show what we value as a society?*
- Compare historical and present-day maps to observe changes in land use.
 - *What can old maps tell us about how people and places have changed over time?*
- Discuss how environmental changes affect the people who live in a place.
 - *How do people adapt when their environment changes, like after a drought or fire?*
- Identify causes of population growth in urban areas.
 - *What makes a city a desirable place to live—and how can too many people affect that?*
- Investigate how cultural traditions adapt to changing environments.
 - *How do people hold onto traditions even when their surroundings change?*
- Describe how cultural characteristics of a place are sustained or evolve.
 - *How can a community change over time but still keep its identity?*
- Identify natural resources found in different U.S. regions.
 - *Why are natural resources so important when choosing where to live?*
- Explain how access to fresh water affects settlement.
 - *Would you rather live near a river or in the desert? Why?*
- Examine how farming opportunities affect where people move.

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- *How has farming shaped where people live in the United States?*
- Describe how fishing and mining influence settlement patterns.
 - *If a resource runs out, what happens to the people and towns that depend on it?*
- Understand the role of transportation (roads, waterways) in movement and trade.
 - *How do roads and rivers shape the way people and goods move across the country?*
- Analyze how digital infrastructure supports modern movement of ideas.
 - *Can the internet shape where people live just like rivers and roads used to?*
- Explore economic reasons people move to a new region.
 - *What kinds of jobs might make someone move from one part of the U.S. to another?*
- Understand social and political reasons people move.
 - *Why might a family leave one country or state to live in another?*
- Identify current migration patterns in the U.S.
 - *Why are some states growing faster than others in population today?*
- Use migration maps to trace the movement of people over time.
 - *What can we learn about the U.S. from how and where people have moved over time?*
- Explore how the availability of jobs and housing influences settlement.
 - *Can a shortage of housing or jobs push people out of the community?*
- Examine how different groups have shaped the development of communities.
 - *How do people from different cultures influence the places they settle in?*
- Define cultural enclave and identify examples in the U.S.
 - *What makes a place like “Little Haiti” or “Koreatown” special—and how does it serve the people who live there?*
- Analyze push and pull factors behind the creation of cultural enclaves.
 - *What pushes people to leave their home country—and what pulls them toward a new one?*
- Explore how language, food, and religion are preserved in cultural enclaves.
 - *What happens when people from different cultures bring their traditions to a new place?*
- Understand how neighborhoods grow around shared culture or identity.
 - *How does sharing a culture help people feel more at home in a new country?*
- Use primary sources (photos, diaries) to study immigrant experiences.
 - *What can personal stories tell us about what it feels like to move to a new place?*
- Analyze how cultural communities adapt to American life while maintaining traditions.
 - *Can a person become part of American culture without giving up their own culture?*
- Examine how traditions evolve over generations.
 - *How might a tradition change as it’s passed down from grandparents to grandchildren?*
- Compare two different cultural enclaves in the U.S.
 - *How are Little Saigon and Little Albania similar? How are they different?*
- Evaluate how monuments and memorials preserve community identity.
 - *Why do communities build monuments—and what stories do they tell?*
- Use multiple sources to build a timeline of a community’s development.
 - *How can a timeline help us see the full story of how a community formed and grew?*
- Reflect on how migration, culture, and place shape the identity of the United States.
 - *What makes the United States a country shaped by movement and tradition?*

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Instructional Strategies/Differentiated Instruction

- Whole group instruction and small group discussions
- Paragraph frames and sentence starters
- Teacher modeling
- Graphic organizers
- Accountable talk
- Homework
- Word walls with visuals
- Small group instruction
- Visual exemplars with teacher and student critiques
- Text and video chunking
- Spiraling back to guiding questions
- Multiple CFUs
- Close reading with text-dependent questions

EL Differentiation Strategies

- Word Banks and Word Walls with visuals
- TWPS (Think, write, pair, share)
- Pre-reading strategies
- Culturally responsive teaching
- Explicit teacher modeling
- Key vocabulary
- Graphic organizers
- Strategic Grouping
- Non-verbal assessments

Assessments

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Do Now
- Academic Discourse
- Exit Slips
- Accountable Talk Discussions
- Completed notes
- Completed graphic organizers
- Homework
- Performance Task -- “From Here to There” Immigrant Story
 - Teacher’s rubric/scoring guide

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Quiz: Vocabulary terms and definitions (EU1, EU2, and EU3)
- Listen/Interpret FIAB
- Unit Task: “From Here to There” Immigrant Story (EU1, EU2 and EU3)

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Unit Task
Unit Task Name: “From Here to There” Immigrant Story Description: Students will research and write a narrative nonfiction comic strip that follows the journey of an individual, family, or cultural group who migrated to the United States, explaining: why they moved (push/pull factors), what region they settled in and why (natural resources, geography, opportunity), how the environment and culture of the place changed over time, and how their traditions were preserved, changed, or shared in their new community. The final product will be a historically informed narrative, integrating geography, history, and ELA standards. Students will also include a visual map or timeline. Evaluation: Teacher’s Scoring Guide

Unit Resources
● Immigrant Narrative Description and Exemplars (developed and refined with class) ● Google Classroom ● Historical Fiction Book Read Aloud ● Community Faces – Student Work (Primary and Secondary Sources Included) ● Climate and Geographical Resources - Teacher Google Slides ● Central and South American Map ● Push / Pull Factors Article ● Immigrant Stereotypes Reading ● Fact, Reasoned Opinion, Stereotype Graphic Organizer ● Reflection Form Template ● Peer Critique / Revision Form Template