



## Exploring *Home* Across the Globe

### Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain the difference between a house and a home.
- Identify ways in which weather, physical geography, socio-economic status, available resources, and population density impact the style and construction of houses around the world.
- Create an interactive digital presentation to demonstrate their knowledge.

### Duration

2–3 class periods of 60 minutes each

### Lesson Overview

Merriam-Webster defines a house as a building that serves as living quarters for one or a few families. Houses around the world differ greatly from region to region and are adapted to suit various climate zones. Peace Corps Volunteers put their purpose, passion, and skills into action in partnership with welcoming host communities. While serving, Volunteers work alongside community members on local projects, often while staying in the home of a community member(s). This allows Volunteers to more fully integrate into their host community and participate in the activities of daily life. Peace Corps Volunteers can be found in more than 60 countries around the world, and in this activity, several of them documented the meaning of home in the community where they were living. Below are a few examples of the videos they captured, while volunteering in host countries:

- [Highlighting Home: Cambodia](#) In Cambodia, close-knit families make a place a home. Watch this video to learn some Khmer words for family members.
- [Highlighting Home: Guinea](#) In Guinea, women often play a central role in daily life. Watch to learn more about the typical day of a woman in the Haute Guinea (Upper Guinea) region of the country, and her efforts to create a home.
- [Highlighting Home: Colombia](#) In Colombia, it's values like love, respect, and mutual care that make a home. Join a Peace Corps Volunteer as she highlights the meaning of home in Colombia.

This lesson will give students the opportunity to explore homes around the world and the connection to global cultures and climates. Students will consider:

- The concept of “home” as it relates to their culture and others.
- How environments around the world influences the construction of houses.
- The availability of materials to make houses within communities.

Students will have the opportunity to “travel” around the world and explore how houses are built and how homes differ from one community to another. It is important to note that a home is structured around family and community relationships, whereas a house is the physical structure. In different countries, communities use locally available, creative, and sustainable materials to build houses. Students will consider what houses are made of, why they are made of that, and how culture along with climate zones impact the construction of houses.

Teacher Note: Students should take note that houses can differ within one country, like urban and rural areas where they live. Students should be asked to make this consideration and determine why these differences occur.

Students will create an interactive Google Earth-style presentation to demonstrate what they have learned and showcase what makes a “home” around the world. Using found images as well as historical research, students will showcase three different types of houses from three different climate zones. They will explain why the houses are suitable for the climate zone and how they utilize the available resources of the area. They can also include information about culture, religion, population density, physical geography, and socio-economic considerations that have impacted the way houses are built in those areas.

## Driving Question

How do people from various climate zones and cultures around the world use their resources to make functional houses into homes?

## Standards

### National Standards: National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

Theme 1—Culture: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.

- Through experience, observation, and reflection, students will identify elements of culture as well as similarities and differences among cultural groups across time and place.

Theme 9—Global Connections: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence.

- Through exposure to various media and first-hand experiences, young learners become aware of how things that happen in one part of the world impact other parts of the world.

## Next Generation Science Standards

ESS2.D: Weather and Climate

- Weather and climate are influenced by interactions involving sunlight, the ocean, the atmosphere, ice, landforms, and living things. These interactions vary with latitude, altitude, and local and regional geography, all of which can affect oceanic and atmospheric flow patterns. (MS–ESS2–6)
- Because these patterns are so complex, weather can only be predicted probabilistically. (MS–ESS2–5)
- The ocean exerts a major influence on weather and climate by absorbing energy from the sun, releasing it over time, and globally redistributing it through ocean currents. (MS–ESS2–6)

## Key Vocabulary

- house
- home
- climate zone
- weather
- physical geography
- socio-economic
- resources

## Materials

- Laptop or device connected to the internet
- Access to graphic editing or presentation software like Discovery Studio, Canva, Google Slides, Keynote, or PowerPoint

## Background Information

Houses around the world are intricately designed to adapt to the physical geography and climate of their locations. For example, in tropical regions where heavy rainfall and humidity are common, houses are often built on stilts to avoid flooding and improve ventilation. In arid desert areas, houses are constructed with thick walls made from materials like adobe or mudbrick, which help keep the interior cool during the scorching day and retain heat during cold nights. In colder climates, houses are designed with steep roofs to prevent snow accumulation and are insulated to retain heat. The choice of building materials—whether it is bamboo in Southeast Asia, wood in northern Europe, or stone in mountainous regions—reflects not just the availability of resources but also centuries of adaptation to local environmental challenges.

However, houses are much more than just shelters—they are our homes. They are the centers of our lives, providing a sense of comfort, safety, and belonging. The design and structure of a house influences how we interact socially, how we prepare and store our food, and how we gather as families and communities. For instance, open courtyards in Mediterranean houses facilitate social gatherings and family activities. Compact, vertical designs of houses in densely populated Asian cities reflect the need for maximizing space and efficiency. Traditional houses in many cultures also incorporate features that reflect cultural or religious values, such as prayer rooms or spaces for ancestral worship, which further underscores the role of houses as more than mere physical structures, but as an integral part of the culture of each place.

Increasing population density and weather patterns are significant factors influencing housing today. Urban areas like Hong Kong and Tokyo are becoming more crowded, leading to an increase in high-rise apartments and compact living spaces designed to accommodate more people in limited space. This trend impacts social dynamics, often reducing communal living spaces and altering traditional ways of life. Weather is also forcing adaptations in housing design. In regions prone to flooding, like Cuba, houses are being built on elevated platforms or moving to higher ground, while in areas experiencing extreme temperatures, there is a push for energy-efficient designs that reduce the need for mechanical heating and cooling. These changes highlight the ongoing relationship between humans and their environment and the need for innovative solutions.

The way we build our houses and live in our homes reflects the relationship between environmental conditions, cultural practices, and socio-economic factors. Understanding these dynamics can provide valuable insights into the variety of human experiences and the common need for spaces that offer safety, comfort, and a sense of belonging. As students explore different types of houses around the world, they will see how each structure tells a story of adaptation, community, and resilience. This perspective not only broadens their understanding of global cultures but also deepens their appreciation for the places they call home.

## Teacher Preparation

- Ensure students have a device connected to the internet.
- Print copies of the "Student Capture Sheet: Highlighting Home." Alternatively, upload these into your Learning Management System or place them into the online platform of your choice to have students complete digitally.

## Session Flow

### Engage: What is "home?" Think, Pair, Share

Activate student involvement by posing the question: "What is 'home'?" Have students draw a picture of their home or their idea of home. Conversely, students could create a mind map of their ideas about what a home looks like. Then have students exchange their ideas in pairs. Students can add ideas to their own conceptions of home after conversing with their partners. Finally, have students share in a class-wide discussion what a home is. In the class discussion, encourage students to consider the following questions:

- What do you think of when you think of the word 'home'?
- What elements do most students have in common in their ideas about home?
- What differences can be seen in their ideas about home?
- What is the difference between a house and a home?
- What is the purpose of a home?
- Why do people's homes differ?

## Explore

Guide students to explore the concept of 'home' in other cultures by watching the short videos produced by Peace Corps Volunteers:

- [Highlighting Home: Cambodia](#) In Cambodia, close-knit families make a place a home. Watch this video to learn some Khmer words for family members.
- [Highlighting Home: Guinea](#) In Guinea, women often play a central role in daily life. Watch to learn more about the typical day of a woman in the Haute Guinea (Upper Guinea) region of the country, and her efforts to create a home.

- [Highlighting Home: Colombia](#) In Colombia, it's values like love, respect, and mutual care that make a home. Join a Peace Corps Volunteer as she highlights the meaning of home in Colombia.
- As students watch the videos, they will fill in the "Student Capture Sheet: Highlighting Home." They will identify similarities and differences in the concepts of home in Cambodia, Guinea, and Colombia. Then they will answer questions about access to resources, socio-economic status, and culture that contribute to the idea of home.

## Investigate

Facilitate the students' investigation into the varied world of global architecture by choosing three different types of houses from three distinct climate zones. They will start by researching the history of each type of house to understand its origins and evolution. Next they will explore the materials used in construction, considering why these materials are ideal for the specific climate zone and how local resources influence their choice. This investigation will help students see the practical aspects of building houses that can withstand local weather conditions from the intense heat of deserts to the heavy rains of tropical regions.

Beyond the physical structure, students will examine the socio-economic factors that make these houses sensible choices for their inhabitants. They will investigate how these houses provide protection from the weather, ensuring safety and comfort. Additionally, students will consider how population density affects housing design and delve into the cultural and religious influences that shape these living spaces. This comprehensive investigation will not only help students appreciate the variety of housing around the world but also understand the deep connections between environment, culture, and daily life. Through this process, they will develop a richer perspective on what makes a house a home in different parts of the globe.

## Create

Guide students as they create an interactive, Google Earth-style presentation. Students will use presentation software such as Discovery Studio, Canva, Google Slides, Keynote, PowerPoint, or a combination of these to compile their information and design a presentation. This dynamic student product will allow viewers to zoom in on different areas of a world map using hot spots and explore the houses that students have researched. By clicking on these houses viewers can see images and access detailed information or audio recordings created by the students, explaining the historical background, materials used, climate suitability, socio-economic rationale, and cultural influences. This interactive format not only reinforces students' understanding but also enhances their presentation and technology skills, making the learning experience engaging and immersive.

This product can be as simple as a four-slide presentation or more complex if students have additional images, research, or other content they would like to add. The main slide of the presentation would be a world map. Students will add markers over the areas on the map where the houses they researched are located. Each marker would then be linked to the slide with corresponding information about that house. In this way, students would need a map slide and three slides with their research about each house and climate zone. Of course, presentations can be much more complex, so this project is adaptable to students' capabilities. Students can include intermediate hotspot slides showing the country, then city, then house, to simulate a "zoom." Students could also include audio files of them telling about the houses and climate zones, images, and even video. Be sure to guide students in citing their sources properly at the end of their presentation.

## Reflection

Invite students to reflect upon their learning experience by considering one or more of the following prompts:

- What was the most surprising thing you learned about houses in different parts of the world?
- Can you draw any parallels between the houses you studied and houses in your own community? What similarities or differences did you notice?
- Reflect on how this project changed or deepened your understanding of what makes a house a home.

Students could respond to these prompts in a journal, on a class discussion board, on an exit ticket, or on a sticky note wall.