

THE SANCHIA PROJECT

From *Geographic Perspectives: Content-Based Activities*.

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Introduction: The relationship between human beings and their environment changes with the introduction of any new technology. New technology alters the way people live their lives; it may improve life; it may bring new problems. However, regardless of its effect, modern technology forces cultural change. In the rapidly expanding technological world of today, the foundations of many cultures are in jeopardy. In this activity, students explore the promises and problems of the introduction of a new form of technology on a traditional culture.

Objectives: Upon completion of the activity students will be able to:

- Describe how technology changes and transforms culture
- Evaluate the positive and negative effects that technology can have on a culture
- Trace how technology has helped to form and shape modern culture in the United States

Grade level: 9-12

Time: Two to three class periods

Materials: Handout 2.4.1, “The Sanchia Project”
Handout 2.4.2, “The Problem”

Procedure:

1. Introduce the activity by asking student to identify ten examples of modern technology. List the ten examples on the chalkboard. Choose two or three of the examples. One at a time, erase them from the chalkboard and ask students how their lives would change if the technology were to somehow disappear or had never been developed. Ask students how life in their country would differ without the technology.
2. Explain to students that technological advances change the way people live. Tell students that technology serves to spread new forms of culture and to transform or sometimes eliminate old ones. Ask students how the technologies that are listed on the chalkboard transformed or eliminated previous forms of culture in their country. Ask them if they think the technology made life better, created significant problems, or both.
3. Tell students that in this activity they will be examining a hypothetical case in which a group of indigenous people is confronted with making a decision whether to accept or resist a new technology in their lives. Explain that generally, traditional cultures are more affected by the

introduction of a new technology than are more technologically advanced cultures. Ask students to explain the reasons for this phenomenon.

4. Provide each student with a copy of Handout 2.4.1, “The Sanchia Project.” Instruct students to read the case study on the handout. After students have read the information, answer any questions they might have.
5. Next, provide each student with a copy of Handout 2.4.2, “The Problem.” Ask students to read the problem.
6. Divide students into six small groups. Each group will represent one of the issues or concerns of the Chepuma people stated on Handout 2.4.2. For example, one group will represent those who believe that the sacred and holy nature of the valley must be preserved at all costs, while another groups will represent those who feel the Chepuma burial site must not be disturbed, and so on. Instruct students to meet in small groups to form arguments on behalf of their issue or concern. Remind them that they will be making a presentation to the Council of Elders who, after hearing from each group, will decide upon a course of action. Tell students that they will need to be prepared to answer questions from the Council of Elders as well as from the other groups. Also suggest that as they plan, they think of questions for the other groups.
7. After students have planned their presentations, select one person from each group to serve as a member of the Council of Elders. Seat the six Elders in the front of the room. Remind them that they will be hearing six presentations, each expressing a particular concern regarding the building of the dam. Tell them that they should feel free to ask questions and that at the conclusion of the presentations they will have the responsibility to decide upon a course of action.
8. Provide time for each group to make their presentations. Allow for questions and discussion from the Council of Elders and the other groups. After all presentations have been made, give the Council of Elders a few minutes to make a decision on a course of action for the Chepuma people. Ask the Council of Elders to publicly announce their decision and the reasons for that decision.
9. Conclude the activity by discussing the following:
 - Electricity would only be the first step in transforming the Chepuma culture. What other changes do you think would occur after electricity is introduced?

- What are the arguments for and against the introduction of modern technology to traditional cultures?
- Give historical examples of how “technology serves to spread new forms of culture and to transform or sometimes eliminate old ones.”