

# World Showcase Class Overview



**Course Title World Showcase: A Journey Through Global Cultures**

**Grade Level Middle School (Grades 6-8)**

## **Course Description**

**Inspired by the enchanting World Showcase pavilion at Disney's Epcot Center, this interdisciplinary class invites students to embark on a virtual "around-the-world" adventure without leaving the classroom. Over the course of the semester, we will explore the 11 countries represented in Epcot's World Showcase: Mexico, Norway, China, Germany, Italy, the United States, Japan, Morocco, France, the United Kingdom, and Canada and more!**

**Through engaging discussions, multimedia presentations, hands-on activities, and guest speakers (when possible), students will delve into the rich tapestry of each nation's history, geography, culture, cuisine, music, current affairs, and famous individuals. The goal is to foster global awareness, cultural appreciation, and critical thinking, encouraging students to see the world as interconnected and vibrant. Just like wandering the 1.2-mile promenade around Epcot's World Showcase Lagoon, students will "travel" clockwise from Mexico to Canada, discovering how these nations shape our shared human story.**

## **Learning Objectives**

**By the end of this course, students will be able to:**

- **Describe key historical events, geographical features, and cultural traditions of the 11 featured countries.**
- **Identify and sample (virtually or through activities) iconic foods and music from each nation, connecting them to broader cultural contexts.**
- **Analyze current global issues affecting these countries, such as immigration issues in the United Kingdom or trade relations involving China and the U.S.**
- **Develop interest and respect for diverse perspectives by participating in group discussions inspired by Epcot's immersive pavilions.**
- **Create a personal "World Showcase Passport" project, compiling insights from all 11 countries to reflect on global citizenship.**

## **Course Structure and Schedule**

**This semester-long course meets once weekly for 45-60 minute sessions, blending social studies, geography, current events and the arts. Each country receives one dedicated week, and we will also have time for each program attendee to lead a session on their family ancestry nation.**

**We start with an introductory week on Epcot's World Showcase concept. Travel through the countries in Epcot's clockwise order for a sense of progression around the lagoon.**

- **Week 1: Introduction to World Showcase**  
**Overview of Epcot's design as a "permanent world's fair," pavilion architecture, and why these 11 countries were selected (e.g., sponsorships and cultural diversity).**
- **Icebreaker: Share a favorite family heritage story.**
- **Weeks 1: Mexico**
  - **History: Aztec civilization, Spanish conquest, Texas**
  - **Geography: Diverse landscapes from deserts to rainforests; key sites like the Yucatán Peninsula.**
  - **Culture: Día de los Muertos, mariachi traditions, and folk art.**
  - **Food: Tacos, mole poblano, and chocolate origins—lets eat!**
  - **Music: Mariachi bands and corridos; listen to tracks from the Epcot pavilion's Mariachi Cobre.**
  - **Current Affairs: Immigration, The Gulf of America.**
  - **Famous Individuals: Frida Kahlo (artist), César Chávez (activist), or Octavio Paz (Nobel laureate).**  
*Activity: Who would make your Coco photo collage?*
- **Week 2: Norway & The Ukraine**
  - **History: Viking Age, Norse mythology, and independence from Sweden (1905).**
  - **Geography: Fjords, northern lights, and Arctic Circle.**
  - **Culture: Sami indigenous traditions and hygge-like coziness.**
  - **Food: Lefse, smoked salmon, and aquavit—explore Nordic foraging.**
  - **Music: Folk fiddles and modern pop like A-ha; tie to Epcot's Frozen Ever After soundtrack.**
  - **Current Affairs: Renewable energy leadership and oil dependency debates.**
  - **Famous Individuals: Roald Amundsen (polar explorer), Edvard Grieg (composer), or Grete Waitz (marathon pioneer).**  
*Activity: How to Train Your Dragon vs Frozen*
  - **Program Special; The Ukraine!!!**
- **Weeks 3: China**
  - **History: Ancient dynasties (e.g., Great Wall builders), Opium Wars, and Cultural Revolution.**
  - **Geography: Himalayas, Yangtze River, and vast urban-rural contrasts.**
  - **Culture: Confucianism, festivals like Lunar New Year, and calligraphy.**

- **Food:** Dim sum, Peking duck, and tea ceremonies—lets eat
- **Music:** Traditional erhu and guzheng; contemporary like Jay Chou.
- **Current Affairs:** Taiwan and U.S.-China trade tensions.
- **Famous Individuals:** Confucius (philosopher), Yao Ming (athlete), or Malala-inspired activists.

*Activity:* Create a Chinese lantern and share folktales.

- **Week 4: Germany**

- **History:** Holy Roman Empire, World Wars, and Tear Down This Wall!
- **Geography:** Rhine Valley, Black Forest, and Bavarian Alps.
- **Culture:** Oktoberfest, fairy tales (Brothers Grimm), and engineering precision.
- **Food:** Pretzels, sauerkraut, and Black Forest cake—polka band video from Epcot's Biergarten.
- **Music:** Classical (Bach, Beethoven) and oompah folk.
- **Current Affairs:** EU leadership and refugee policies.
- **Famous Individuals:** Albert Einstein (scientist), Anne Frank (diarist), or Angela Merkel (chancellor).

*Activity:* Stage a mini Oktoberfest.

- **Week 5: Italy**

- **History:** Roman Empire, Renaissance, and unification (1861).
- **Geography:** Apennine Mountains, Mediterranean coast, and Venice canals.
- **Culture:** Opera, fashion, and la dolce vita.
- **Food:** Pasta, pizza, gelato—lets eat!
- **Music:** Opera arias (Puccini) and pop like Andrea Bocelli.
- **Current Affairs:** Mediterranean migration and economic recovery.
- **Famous Individuals:** Leonardo da Vinci (inventor), Sophia Loren (actress), or Galileo (astronomer).

*Activity:* Sketch Renaissance art and favorite Luca characters!

- **Week 6: The United States**

- **History:** Colonial era, Civil War, Civil Rights Movement, and space race.
- **Geography:** From Grand Canyon to Appalachian Mountains...our National Parks!
- **Culture:** Jazz, Hollywood, and diverse immigrant influences.
- **Food:** Barbecue, apple pie, regional specialties—lets eat!
- **Music:** Blues, hip-hop, and Broadway; Yankee Doodle Dandy

- **Current Affairs: The News!**
- **Famous Individuals: Martin Luther King Jr. (activist), Walt Disney (innovator), or Amelia Earhart (aviator).**  
*Activity: National Parks You Have Seen*
- **Week 7: Japan**
  - **History: Samurai era, Meiji Restoration, and post-WWII economic miracle.**
  - **Geography: Islands, Mount Fuji, and cherry blossoms.**
  - **Culture: Tea ceremonies, anime, and Shinto shrines.**
  - **Food: Sushi, ramen, matcha—Epcot's Mitsukoshi store vibes.**
  - **Music: Enka, J-pop, and taiko drums.**
  - **Current Affairs: Aging population and tech innovation.**
  - **Famous Individuals: Hayao Miyazaki (animator), Marie Curie-inspired scientists like Hideki Yukawa (physicist).**  
*Activity: Haiku book!*
- **Week 8: Morocco**
  - **History: Berber kingdoms, Arab conquests, and independence (1956).**
  - **Geography: Sahara Desert, Atlas Mountains, and Atlantic coast.**
  - **Culture: Souks, henna art, and Islamic architecture.**
  - **Food: Tagine, couscous, mint tea**
  - **Music: Gnawa rhythms and Andalusian influences.**
  - **Current Affairs: The News**
  - **Famous Individuals: Ibn Battuta (explorer), Zineb El Rhazoui (journalist).**  
*Activity: Lets eat!*
- **Week 9: France**
  - **History: French Revolution, Napoleonic era, and World Wars.**
  - **Geography: Loire Valley, Provence lavender fields, and Alps.**
  - **Culture: Art museums, fashion weeks, and café society.**
  - **Food: Croissants, escargot, crêpes—Epcot's bakery delights.**
  - **Music: Chanson (Edith Piaf) and electronic like Daft Punk.**
  - **Current Affairs: EU relations and Paris climate accords.**
  - **Famous Individuals: Coco Chanel (designer), Louis Pasteur (scientist), or Victor Hugo (author).**  
*Activity: Lets eat!*

- **Week 10: The United Kingdom**
  - **History:** Roman Britain, Magna Carta, Industrial Revolution, and empire.
  - **Geography:** Scottish Highlands, English countryside, and Welsh coasts.
  - **Culture:** Afternoon tea, pubs, and monarchy traditions.
  - **Food:** Fish and chips, scones—Epcot's Rose & Crown pub fare.
  - **Music:** Beatles, classical (Elgar), and Celtic folk.
  - **Current Affairs:** Brexit impacts and Northern Ireland peace.
  - **Famous Individuals:** William Shakespeare (playwright), Queen Elizabeth II (monarch), or Tim Berners-Lee (WWW inventor).

*Activity:* Reenact a Shakespeare scene.
- **Week 11: Canada**
  - **History:** Indigenous nations, French-British colonies, and confederation (1867).
  - **Geography:** Rocky Mountains, Great Lakes, and tundra.
  - **Culture:** Multiculturalism, hockey, and maple syrup festivals.
  - **Food:** Poutine, butter tarts—lets eat!
  - **Music:** Folk (Gordon Lightfoot) and indigenous drumming.
  - **Current Affairs:** Indigenous reconciliation and Arctic sovereignty.
  - **Famous Individuals:** Wayne Gretzky (athlete), Margaret Atwood (author), or Terry Fox (activist).

*Activity:* Lets eat!

### Teaching Methods and Activities

- **Discussions:** Socratic seminars on topics like "How does geography shape a nation's food?"
- **Multimedia:** Videos from Epcot pavilions, Google Earth tours, and music playlists.
- **Hands-On:** Mostly food...we will eat!
- **Guest Elements:** Virtual Zoom from cultural reps or Epcot cast members.
- **Field Trip (Optional):** If feasible, a visit to a local ethnic festival or museum to "extend" the showcase.

## **Assessment**

- **Participation in discussions and activities (30%).**
- **Quizzes on key facts (30%).**
- **Final passport presentation (40%).**

**All assessments emphasize understanding over memorization, with rubrics focusing on creativity and global connections.**

**This class transforms the magic of Epcot into a classroom passport to the world, sparking curiosity and lifelong learning. Bon voyage—let's showcase the globe!**

**Other nations may be added if program attendees wish to present on their families cultures!**