

Unit 26

World History and Identity

Section 1

Unit Materials

Questions To Consider

Question 1.

Globalization refers to the process by which the peoples of the world become increasingly integrated — socially, economically, and culturally — into a larger world community. How does globalization shape and redefine identities, whether individual, ethnic, or national?

Question 2.

How is it possible that globalization can both increase the integration of the Earth's people and sharpen the differences between them?

Question 3.

The process of globalization is at least five hundred years old. Despite the fact that globalization is not a new phenomenon, in what ways does the globalization of the last one hundred years differ from globalization in earlier periods?

Question 4.

In what ways is the study of world history itself a product of globalization?

The Big Picture

How is this topic related to Increasing Integration?

The very term “globalization” refers to the increasing integration of the world's people through economic, cultural, and social ties. This pattern has intensified greatly in the last one hundred years.

How is this topic related to Proliferating Difference?

Although globalization entails increasing integration, some communities, groups, or nations respond to these forces by developing increased awareness of cultural or ethnic difference.

Unit Purpose

- Contemporary globalization can shape individual and group identities in many ways.
- Migration and the creation of diaspora communities are ways people can develop transnational, hybrid identities.
- The forces of globalization can converge on local identities, transforming them into national identities that express themselves in terms of difference.

- Through studying the shared human past, world history can contribute to the creation of a common, global, human identity.

Unit Content Overview

Globalization is not a new phenomenon. However, the level, pace, and intensity of interaction between societies and cultures has increased dramatically in the last one hundred years, and seem set to continue in the future. Communications technologies, economic relationships, wars, dislocations, and migrations have all increased the rate at which peoples from widely disparate areas have become linked. The accelerating pace of these interactions and linkages has had a profound effect on the ways individuals and groups perceive themselves and those around them. New and often disruptive ideas can now easily penetrate most societies of the world, while communities separated by millions of miles can maintain cohesive group identities. These processes place all societies under a great pressure to adjust and adapt; these adjustments can be expressed in terms of embracing integration, maintaining a sense of difference, or a combination of both.

At the most basic level, globalization requires very individual and personal assessments of one's place in the world. This unit explores questions about what it means to become a member of a global community; whether the introduction of new elements from outside weaken old ties; and what impact our expanding affiliations and/or animosities have on our concepts of self. Globalization operates on many levels, either to broaden or to threaten group cohesiveness. Globalization can also supplement or supplant both individual and group perceptions of identity. The contemporary study of world history has been shaped by the experiences of globalization, and it provides a perspective to help us grasp the complexities of modern global identity.

Unit References

Arjun Appadurai, "Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization," *Public Worlds* 1 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).

David Eltis, *Coerced and Free Migration: Global Perspectives (The Making of Modern Freedom)* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2002).

Adam McKeown, "Global Migration, 1846-1940," *Journal of World History* 15, no. 2 (2004), 155–90.

Adam McKeown, "Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas, 1842-1949," *Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 2 (May 1999), 306–37.

Gungwu Wang, *Global History and Migrations* (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1997).

Global Historical Context

- Time Period: 1914–present
- Global integration accelerated in the twentieth century. It became increasingly clear that events occurring in one area frequently came to involve far distant areas — through economic connections, cultural and political influences, and wars. World War I, which began as a Balkan conflict, eventually entangled much of the world through a complex system of alliances and through Europe's colonial possessions. The Great Depression of the 1930s provided an excellent example of the ways that the world had become economically connected for better or worse, as financial failures in the United States had

repercussions in Europe, Asia, and Africa. World War II, as well, demonstrated that most of the world's peoples could become embroiled in war. After this war, both decolonization (1947-1980s) and the Cold War (1945-1989) transformed the world's borders, economies, and political alliances. Throughout the twentieth century, long-distance trade and long-distance travel have continued to make the world's regions both more integrated and more diverse. Ironically, these very forces have often prompted people to emphasize ethnic, national, and racial differences.

AP Themes

- Explores interactions in economics and politics by focusing on the globalizing effects of twentieth-century trade and international exchange.
- Examines change and continuity by exploring the ways globalization leads to cultural and economic change while also prompting people to focus on the need for preserving cultural continuity.
- Discusses technology, demography, and environment by looking at the ways that technologies such as rapid transport, media, and computers aid the process of globalization and allow for the maintenance of connections between distant peoples.
- Pays attention to cultural and intellectual developments by showing how globalization modifies and shapes cultures all over the world.

Related Units

- Unit 1. Maps, Time, and World History: What tools do world historians use in the study of history? This unit begins the study of world history by examining its use of geographical and chronological frameworks: how they have shaped the understanding of world history and been used to chart the past. It is related to Unit 26 because it argues that history is written in a given context — in this case, globalization — and that its context influences how historians explain the world around them.
- Unit 18. Rethinking the Rise of the West: How does historical scholarship change over time, and why do the perspectives of historians shift? This unit recaps the economic and political events that led to the rise of the West. It also examines and re-examines those events through differing opinions of its causes, reflecting changes in historical interpretation. It is related to Unit 26 because the particular form globalization has taken was deeply influenced by European domination and the rise of the West.
- Unit 24. Globalization and Economics: How have the forces of globalization shaped the modern world? This unit travels from the Soviet Union to Sri Lanka and Chile to study the role of technology, and the impact of economic and political changes wrought by globalization. It is related to Unit 26 because of its specific focus on globalization, and because global economic forces are often influential in shaping individual and group identities.
- Unit 25. Global Popular Culture: What are the sounds and sights of an emerging global culture? From World Cup soccer to Coca-Cola, modern icons reflect the intertwined cultural, political, and commercial dimensions of globalization. This unit listens to and looks at the music and images of global production and consumption — from reggae to the Olympics. It is related to Unit 26 because popular culture is another extremely influential way that identities are being shaped in the contemporary globalized world.

Section 2

Video-Related Materials

Video Segment 1: The Chinese Diaspora

Individuals and communities cope with the challenges of globalization in a variety of ways. This segment explores one of those ways through a look at the hybrid, transnational identities forged by more than twenty million Chinese migrants who left their homeland after 1850. These migrants, who went to locations as diverse as Siberia, Peru, Indonesia, and the United States, sought both to adapt to their new homes and to maintain a distinctively Chinese identity. To accomplish these tasks, members of the Chinese diaspora formed support networks based on family, language, and region; taught their children the Chinese language; and — especially in recent years — maintained contacts with one another through communications technologies. One result of the formation of Chinese diaspora identities is that local differences between Chinese people — which are important markers of identity within China — have become less important among Chinese people outside of China.

Video Segment 2: The Chechens

Globalization can also contribute to individual and group identities that form in resistance to external pressures. This segment explores the example of the Chechen people, who developed an increasingly distinctive ethnic and national identity in response first to Russian expansion, then to Soviet policies, and finally to post-Soviet Russian attempts to force Chechens to remain a part of Russia. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, Chechen resistance to Russian imperial expansion into the Chechen homeland prompted increasing numbers of Chechens to convert to Islam. In the Soviet period, Josef Stalin brutally deported most Chechens and replaced them with Russian settlers. This event encouraged some Chechens to adopt a radical form of Islam, and to demand self-determination. Once the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989, Chechens tried to declare their independence from Russia. They were met with military force by the Russian state — a reaction fueled in part by the fact that Chechnya is a land rich in oil. In each case, Chechens responded to policies and programs implemented by states that were themselves caught up in global struggles for territory, ideological power, and natural resources.

Perspectives on the Past: Globalization and World History

How important is it to understand globalization? What is the most important contribution world history can make to understand the process of globalization? Father and son William and John McNeill address these questions in an interview with Heidi Roupp, founder of the World History Network. Both McNeills agree that it is imperative for us to understand globalization in this era of ever-accelerating integration. Both also agree that world history's greatest contribution may be to soften some of the sharp edges of difference in multi-ethnic societies by emphasizing our common human heritage.

Video Details

Who Is Interviewed

- Patrick Manning
- Douglas Lee
- Richard Bulliet
- Heidi Roupp
- William McNeill
- J.R. McNeill

Primary Source Materials Featured in the Video

- Mary N. Leong, Chinese American
- Ramzan Magomedov, Chechen Emigrant

Program Contents

Begins	Ends	Contents
00:00	01:27	Show tease, show opening credits
01:28	04:26	Program overview/introduction
04:27	11:55	Video Segment 1. <i>The Chinese Diaspora</i>
11:56	21:44	Video Segment 2. <i>The Chechens</i>
21:45	26:24	Perspectives on the Past: <i>Globalization and World History</i>
25:25	28:25	Show close and program credits