

Sustaining Traditions: Holy Trinity in Russia

Importance of Renewing Traditions

Grade level: 9-12 grade (Social Studies / Humanities class)

Time: 45 minute lesson

Objective: Students will be able to identify various ways people in America honor the memory of a relative or friend who has passed away.

Procedure:

Ask students: In groups of 2-3 students. Have students discuss how they or their family mourn the loss of a loved one or friend, and how they commemorate the dead. Once the small groups have recorded their methods of mourning and commemorating, the entire class lists ways our culture grieves the loss of a loved one or friend and remembers them after death. Students must distinguish between their religious ways of grieving and commemoration, and their personal or family ways. After the class list is written on the board, the class is to identify the common and unique ways of remembering the deceased. The teacher can present how different cultures and religious practices have both similar and unique ways of remembering the deceased.

Examples: Students can review how Holy Trinity week in most Russian villages is a time for reflection on the deceased and how it also marks the springtime renewal for nature and the living. Below are pictures of how Trinity is observed in a small Russian village.



Small rural cemetery



Scarf on the cross represents a recent burial. The bench is for people to spend time with their loved one.



Grave is cared for by loved ones.



A table between two graves for the family to share a meal with the deceased during Trinity.



3 women from Sagutyevvo sing songs of celebration and grief for the lives of their ancestors. After singing, they share a meal at the graveside as a way to remember and connect with the dead. This Trinity custom is common among older residents of Sagutyevvo.



Decorated graves and fenced in plots.



Decorated graves and fenced in plots



Small piece of candy on top of the grave



People of Sagutyevo decorating their home with greenery during the week of Trinity. This tradition is mainly the focus of older village members. The embroidered wall hangings in the corner surround an icon, a holy image of a saint or sacred event. Icons are often displayed in Russian Orthodox Christian homes.



Green plants are placed inside a home or meeting place to decorate and to represent the season of renewal.

Closing activity: Ask students to respond to the following questions: In a 5 paragraph essay,

How would the loss of Trinity traditions impact Russian culture and folklore?

Why is the continual practice of customs and traditions important to the survival of any culture?

Do you think traditions and or folklore in Russia and America are fading away? Why? (defend your arguments with specific examples from both cultures)