Unit 3 Cheat Sheet: Cultural Patterns and Processes

AP® Human Geography · Unit 3 Review · Topics 3.1 to 3.8

> **The big idea:** Every Unit 3 topic follows a cultural trait from its hearth, along the path it travels (diffusion), to what it changes in a new place. Religion and language are two of the clearest ways to see culture on a map. Unit 3 is about 12 to 17 percent of the multiple-choice section, and FRQs favor the types of diffusion and the "hearth, path, change" move.
>
> **How to use it:** Fill in the blank version from memory first, then check it here. Star anything you missed. Those are your review targets.

KEY TERMS

Culture, folk and popular (Topic 3.1)

Cultural trait	A single feature of a culture: a food, a style of dress, a type of house.
Folk culture	Small, often rural, close-knit groups; slow to change, local (Old Order Amish).
Popular culture	Starts in big cities, spreads fast through media, changes constantly (fast food).
Hearth	Where a trait begins (ancient hearths: Mesopotamia, Nile, Indus, Huang He).
Taboo	A behavior a culture forbids by custom, such as eating certain foods.
Ethnocentrism	Judging another culture by the standards of your own.
Cultural relativism	Understanding a practice in its own cultural context (the geographer's goal).

Cultural landscapes (Topic 3.2)

Cultural landscape	The natural landscape as changed by people: the visible record of a culture.
Sequent occupance	Each group builds on the imprint of the last (Córdoba's mosque-cathedral).
Sacred space	A place a religion treats as holy (Jerusalem; the Ganges River).
Uniform landscape	Popular culture makes places look alike (the same chain stores and malls).

Cultural patterns and sense of place (Topic 3.3)

Sense of place	The feelings and meaning people attach to a place.
Placemaking	Shaping a space to show identity (red lanterns in San Francisco's Chinatown).
Ethnic enclave	An area where one ethnic group clusters, by choice or forced (redlining).
Toponym	A place name that records who named it (Spanish names like Santa Fe).
Centripetal force	Unites a group (a shared language or religion). The same trait can also divide.
Centrifugal force	Divides a group (language or religious differences that fuel conflict).

Why culture spreads, then and now (Topics 3.5 and 3.6)

Colonialism	A power settles a territory and rules it directly (Spanish in Latin America).
Imperialism	Extending power over other lands, with or without settlers.
Lingua franca	A shared language for people with different native languages (Swahili).
Creolization	Cultures and languages blend into new forms, such as a creole language.
Time-space convergence	Tech shrinks distance, so traits spread in days (Unit 1: time-space compression).
Cultural convergence	Cultures grow more alike through contact (global brands, shared media).
Cultural divergence	Cultures grow apart or resist outside influence (the Amish limit technology).
Language loss	Indigenous languages lose speakers as major ones spread (Kusunda in Nepal).

Diffusion of religion and language (Topic 3.7)

Universalizing religion	Seeks converts from every group (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism).
Ethnic religion	Tied to one group and place; most join by birth (Hinduism, Judaism, Shinto).
Language family	Languages from one ancient ancestor; Indo-European is most widely spoken.
Language branch	A closer group in a family (Romance: Spanish, French, Italian, from Latin).
Dialect	A regional or social version of a language (British, American English).
Isogloss	Map line where a word or pronunciation changes ("pop" vs. "soda").

Effects of diffusion (Topic 3.8)

Acculturation	A group adopts some majority traits but keeps its own (foods, holidays).
Assimilation	A group mostly replaces its traits with the majority's (often over generations).
Syncretism	Traits from two cultures blend into something new (Vodou in Haiti).
Multiculturalism	Many cultures live side by side, each keeping its identity (Canada's policy).

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TYPES OF DIFFUSION (TOPIC 3.4): DID THE PEOPLE MOVE, OR JUST THE IDEA?

TYPE	PEOPLE OR IDEA?	HOW IT SPREADS	EXAMPLE
Relocation	The people move	With migrants, skipping places	English to Australia (settlers)
Contagious	Only the idea (expansion)	Contact, in person or online	A dance challenge racing online
Hierarchical	Only the idea (expansion)	Rank: powerful places first	Fashion: Milan, Paris, then towns
Reverse hierarchical	Only the idea (expansion)	Bottom up: ordinary people first	South Bronx rap goes global
Stimulus	Only the idea (expansion)	Same idea, new form	McDonald's McAloo Tikki, India

DON'T CONFUSE THESE

Relocation vs. expansion	If the people moved, it is relocation. If the idea spread while people stayed put, it is expansion.
Hierarchical vs. contagious	Hierarchical jumps by rank (a far-off big city before the village next door). Contagious passes from each adopter to the people in contact with them, in person or online, whatever their rank.
Stimulus diffusion vs. syncretism	Stimulus is a way a trait spreads (the idea travels, the form changes). Syncretism is an effect (two traditions fuse into a new one).
Acculturation vs. assimilation	Acculturation adds new traits and keeps the home culture; assimilation mostly replaces it.
Ethnic vs. universalizing religion	Size is not the test: Hinduism is one of the largest religions and is still ethnic. Ask whether it seeks converts from every group; ethnic faiths spread mostly by relocation.
Pidgin vs. creole	A pidgin is a simple language made up to trade or work together, with no native speakers. A creole is a pidgin grown into a full first language (Haitian Creole).

EXAMPLES TO KNOW COLD

New Orleans in layers	A Native portage trail, a French street grid, Spanish brick courtyards, then American office towers: sequent occupance, with each group building on top without erasing it all.
Little Havana, Miami	Spanish signs, Cuban cafés, and murals: placemaking (the process) builds a sense of place (the result).
How English went global	Relocation with British settlers to Australia and North America, hierarchical through colonial offices and elite schools in India; now a worldwide lingua franca.
Christianity's path	From the eastern Mediterranean: contagious through the Roman world, hierarchical after Emperor Constantine converted, then relocation with European colonists and missionaries.
Buddhism's path	From northern India: hierarchical after Emperor Ashoka converted, then missionaries and merchants carried it along the Silk Road and by sea. Now a small minority in its own hearth.

FRQ: HOW UNIT 3 SHOWS UP

PROMPT SAYS	WHAT TO DO
Identify	Name it. No explanation needed.
Define	Give the meaning of the term.
Describe	Give its key features or details.
Explain	Say how or why, and connect the cause to the result ("because," "which leads to").
Compare	Give a similarity or a difference between two things.
Explain the degree to which	Pick low, moderate, or high, then explain why.

Likely Unit 3 FRQ angles

- Explain how a religion or language diffused.
- Describe a data trend; use both tables when asked.
- Describe how contagious and hierarchical diffusion differ (naming both is not enough).
- Explain how migration spreads culture traits (relocation, ethnic enclaves).
- Explain how time-space compression speeds up diffusion.
- Explain the degree to which global popular culture threatens local cultures (convergence vs. divergence).

> **FRQ rules:** Hearth, path, change: name where the trait began and the type of diffusion, then explain how it spread and what it changed, with a real example. Write in complete sentences; if a part asks for one example, only your first one is scored.

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