Language and religion

from the Esri GeoInquiries™ collection for Human Geography

HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

Audience – Human geography	Time required – 15 minutes

Activity	Explore patterns of cultural diffusion through linguistic and religious data.

APHG Benchmarks	APES: III.B2 Explain the diffusion of cultural traits through time and place.
	APES: III.B1 Explain cultural patterns as they vary by place and region.

Learning Outcomes	• Students will be able to analyze diffusion patterns of languages and religions and to identify correlations between the two.

Map URL: http://esriurl.com/humanGeoInquiry6

❓ Ask

How do linguistic patterns affect the spread of religion?

– Cultural diffusion is the spreading of cultural traits from one group or place to another.

? How can one cultural trait influence the spread of another cultural trait? How could language or religion influence the diffusion of the other? *[Language: ideas of a religion spread more easily to speakers of similar languages. Religion: often tied to the use of a particular language, the spread of a religion will spread the use of that language. Both: a colonizer can bring both language and religion to a new area (relocation diffusion).]*

? What are some factors that would help the spread of a religion? *[Common language, colonialism, and economic interaction help spread religion.]*

⬇ Acquire

How are languages and religions distributed?

→ Click the map URL above to launch the map.

→ With the Details button underlined, click the button, Show Contents of Map (Content).

? What is noticeable about the distribution of religions? *[Religions diffuse more along lines of latitude than longitude; indigenous religions are located in lightly populated areas.]*

→ Click the checkbox to the left of the layer name, Languages Families of the World.

? Which language family is the most widely diffused? *[Indo-European]*

🔍 Explore

How do patterns of religion vary?

→ Click the button, Bookmarks. Select South America.

→ Turn the language and religion layers on and off to explore patterns.

? Which religions are dominant in South America? *[Roman Catholic and indigenous.]*

→ Pan the map to North America.

? Which religions are dominant in North America? *[Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Mormon.]*

? What relationship exists between language and religion in North America? *[Catholicism is tied to Romance languages, and Protestantism is tied to Germanic languages.]*

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Analyze

Compare the patterns of European languages and religions.

→ Click the button, Bookmarks. Select the Europe bookmark.
→ Turn on only two layers, Judeo-Christian (all forms) and The Indo-European Language Family.
? What patterns do you see between the religions of Europe and the Indo-European language family? *[CMuch of North America, South America, Europe, and Australia have a similar pattern.]*
→ Turn off the two layers.
→ Turn on the layer, Major World Religions.
→ Click the other bookmarks.
? Which region has the greatest religious diversity? *[Africa and Southeast Asia have the greatest diversity.]*

Act

What factors influence the diffusion of a religion?

→ Press the button, Measure. Select Distance. Use Miles. (See Tooltip below for more.)
? Measure how far Islam has spread east & west from Mecca. *[~ 6,700 miles and ~3,800 miles, respectively.]*
? How did physical and human factors serve as barriers and supports for the spread of Islam? *[Mountains and cultural differences were barriers to diffusion, whereas plains, rivers, sea access, and cultural linkages enabled it.]*

MEASURE

- Click the button, Measure.
- Click the button, Distance.
- Set the unit of measurement.
- Click once to start measuring, click again to change direction, and double-click to stop measuring.

BOOKMARKS

- Click the button, Bookmarks.
- Click bookmark of interest to zoom to a map location and scale.

Next Steps

DID YOU KNOW? ArcGIS Online is a mapping platform freely available to public, private, and home schools. A school subscription provides additional security, privacy, and content features. Learn more about ArcGIS Online and how to get a school subscription at http://www.esri.com/schools.

THEN TRY THIS...
- Use the Overlay analysis tool to create a new data layer that combines both language and religion into a single layer. Then, analyze the geographic relationships.
- Create a story map to describe languages or religions around the world. Use photos, videos, or text to tell the story.

TEXT REFERENCES

This GIS map has been cross-referenced to material in sections of chapters from these texts.

- *Human Geography: A Short Introduction by Oxford University Press – Chapter 10*
- *The Cultural Landscape by Pearson – Chapters 5, 6*
- *Human Geography: People, Place, and Culture by Wiley Press – Chapters 5, 6*