The Simple AP® Human Geography Unit 3 Cheat Sheet

3.1 Introduction to Culture

What Culture Is

Culture: shared practices, attitudes & behaviors a society passes on; learned, not inherited.
Cultural trait: 1 piece of culture, e.g., food, dress, architecture, language, religion.
Folk culture: small, rural groups; slow to change.
Pop culture: large, urban groups; spreads fast.

Trait	Folk	Popular
Scale	Local, rural	Global, urban
Change	Slow	Rapid
Diffusion	Relocation	Hierarchical
Landscape	Distinct	Uniform

Viewing Other Cultures

Ethnocentrism: judging others by your own culture's standards → bias & conflict.
Cultural relativism: judging a culture by its own context & values (the geographer's goal).

⚠ Relativism ≠ approving every practice. It means understanding a trait in its context first.

Key Vocabulary

Taboo: behavior banned by custom (pork in Islam & Judaism, beef in Hinduism, alcohol).
Cultural hearth: where a trait began (e.g., Mesopotamia, Nile, Indus Valley).
Cultural region: area where traits cluster; edges are fuzzy transition zones, not sharp lines.

✓ FRQ: name the trait, then explain HOW it spread. A bare definition rarely scores.

3.2 Cultural Landscapes

Reading the Landscape

Cultural landscape: land changed by people; shows a group's values, tech & history.
Sequent occupance: layers left by groups in 1 place over time (Istanbul: church → mosque).
Religious & language clues: steeples, minarets, shrines, signs & place names (San Antonio).
Built from: physical features, farming, industry, religion, language & architecture.

Architecture & Land Use

Style	Features	Example
Traditional	Local material	Adobe, igloo
Modern	Steel, glass	Skyscrapers
Postmodern	Mixed, playful	Odd shapes

Land use: long-lot (French), grid (US township-range), metes & bounds (irregular).
Placelessness: places start to look the same as pop culture spreads chains & malls.

Identity on the Landscape

Ethnic neighborhoods: Chinatown, Little Italy → shops, temples & signs mark the group.
Gender: more women at work → daycares, mixed-use areas; some cultures separate spaces.
Indigenous lands: reservations & sacred sites show resistance to the dominant culture.

✓ Photo stimulus? Point to 1 feature, name the trait, then link it to a value or era.

⚠ Landscape ≠ scenery. The exam wants the human imprint, not mountains.

3.3 Cultural Patterns

Place & Identity

Sense of place: meaning people attach to a place from its language, religion & ethnicity.
Ethnicity: identity from shared ancestry, language, religion & customs (≠ race, a social category).
Placemaking: shaping public space to show a group's identity (murals, festivals).
Ethnic enclave: cluster of 1 group in a city; keeps culture alive & helps newcomers.

Forces That Unite or Divide

Force	Effect	Example
Centripetal	Unites	Shared lang.
Centrifugal	Divides	Ethnic split

Centripetal: common language, religion, national symbols & shared history → unity.
Centrifugal: rival languages or religions, ethnic tension → separatism (Catalonia, Québec).

Gender & Global Patterns

Gender roles: women's share of jobs ↑ w/ education & city growth; ↓ where custom limits it.
Language & religion can unite (Spanish + Catholicism, Mexico) or divide (India, 1947).
Language as identity: Welsh, Basque & Catalan show regional pride vs. the state.

⚠ Same trait can unite 1 state and divide another. Always tie it to a specific place.

✓ Use scale: Catalan unites the region of Catalonia but divides the state of Spain.

3.4 Types of Diffusion

Relocation vs. Expansion

Relocation: people move & carry the trait w/ them (Irish Catholics to Boston in the 1840s).
Expansion: trait spreads outward from its hearth but stays strong back home, too (3 types ↓).

Type	Spreads	Example
Contagious	Person→person	Viral meme
Hierarchical	Top → down	Fashion
Reverse hier.	Bottom → up	Hip-hop
Stimulus	Idea adapted	McAloo Tikki

Spotting Each Type

Contagious: spreads to nearby people, like a disease (a TikTok trend, early Islam).
Hierarchical: from leaders or big cities down to smaller places (king converts → subjects).
Reverse hierarchical: starts w/ low-status groups or small towns, then moves up (hip-hop).
Stimulus: idea spreads but changes to fit local culture (no-beef menus in India).

Barriers & Distance

Distance decay: contact ↓ as distance ↑; weaker now b/c of the internet & cheap flights.
Barriers: mountains, oceans, taboos, language, censorship, closed borders slow diffusion.

⚠ Relocation needs migration. If people stay and only the idea moves, it's expansion.

✓ Many traits spread by 2+ types (Islam: contagious, then relocation). Name each.

3.5 Historical Causes of Diffusion

Colonialism, Imperialism & Trade

Colonialism: settling & ruling distant lands → imposed language, religion & law.
Imperialism: controlling another land's politics & economy, often w/o many settlers.
Trade: Silk Road & Indian Ocean routes spread Buddhism, Islam, crops & goods.
Missionaries: built schools & churches in the colonies → hierarchical spread of their faith.

Empire	Spread	Legacy
British	English	India, Africa
Spanish	Spanish, Cath.	Latin America
French	French	W. Africa
Arab	Arabic, Islam	N. Africa

Contact Languages

Lingua franca: shared trade language between different groups (Swahili, English).
Pidgin: simple mix of languages for trade; small vocab, simple grammar, no native speakers.
Creole: pidgin that kids learn as a native language w/ full grammar (Haitian Creole).

Why It Matters

Legacies: languages, borders & religions in ex-colonies still reflect the colonizer.
Forced migration: the slave trade carried West African music, foods & faiths to the Americas.

✓ Colonialism = relocation (settlers) + hierarchical (elites, missionaries). Name both.

3.6 Contemporary Causes of Diffusion

Globalization & Technology

Globalization: more economic & cultural links worldwide → traits spread in days, not centuries.
Time-space convergence: travel time ↓ (weeks by ship → hours by plane → seconds online).
Urbanization: cities mix cultures & start trends that spread down the urban hierarchy.
Social media: speeds contagious diffusion of music, slang, memes & fashion worldwide.

Convergence vs. Divergence

Process	Result	Example
Convergence	More alike	Global brands
Divergence	More different	Amish

Cultural convergence: contact makes cultures more alike (jeans, fast food, English words).
Cultural divergence: groups split from or resist outside culture (Amish, Québec language laws).

Global English & Resistance

English: today's lingua franca of business & science; spread by Britain, then US media.
Resistance: France protects French by law; Iceland invents new native words.
Cultural imperialism: 1 culture's media (Hollywood) dominates → local traits can fade.

⚠ Globalization doesn't only make cultures alike. Groups also adapt or push back.

✓ FRQ: pair a cause (social media) w/ a type of diffusion (contagious) & an effect (convergence).

3.7 Diffusion of Religion & Language

Universalizing vs. Ethnic Religions

Religion	Hearth	Diffusion
Christianity	Levant	Reloc. + hier.
Islam	Arabia	Contagious
Buddhism	NE India	Hierarchical
Hinduism	Indus Valley	Relocation
Judaism	Levant	Relocation

Universalizing: seek converts worldwide (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism).
Ethnic: tied to 1 group & its homeland, few converts, spread slowly (Hinduism, Judaism).
Christianity: apostles moved (relocation); Rome's emperor converted (hierarchical).
Islam: spread from Mecca by conquest & trade; traders took it to Indonesia (now largest).
Buddhism: Emperor Asoka spread it (hierarchical); monks & Silk Road traders took it east.

Language Families

Family → branch → language → dialect. Indo-European is the largest language family.
Indo-European origin: Kurgan (nomads, conquest) vs. Anatolian (farmers from Turkey).
Others: Sino-Tibetan (Mandarin), Afro-Asiatic (Arabic), Niger-Congo (Bantu languages).
Bantu migration: farmers spread Niger-Congo languages across sub-Saharan Africa (relocation).

⚠ Buddhism began in India, but most Buddhists now live in E. & SE Asia, not at the hearth.

3.8 Effects of Diffusion

When Cultures Meet

Process	Meaning	Example
Acculturation	Adopt some	Learn English
Assimilation	Lose old	Lang. lost
Syncretism	Blend	Santería
Multicultural	Coexist	Toronto

Acculturation: group adopts some host traits but keeps its core identity (religion, food).
Assimilation: group is fully absorbed & old traits are lost (often forced, e.g., boarding schools).
Syncretism: traits blend into something new (Día de los Muertos, Vodou, Tex-Mex).
Multiculturalism: many cultures live side by side & keep their own identities (Canada).

Language Change

Dialect: regional version of a language; its map boundary = **isogloss** (soda vs. pop).
Endangered language: kids stop learning it → it may go extinct when elders die.
Revival: Hebrew, Irish & Welsh kept alive by schools, media & official status.
Diaspora: scattered group keeps its traits abroad.
Toponyms: place names show who ruled; many renamed after colonial rule (Bombay → Mumbai).

⚠ Acculturation keeps core identity; assimilation erases it. Don't mix the 2 up on the exam.

✓ Syncretism = NEW blend. If cultures just sit side by side, it's multiculturalism.