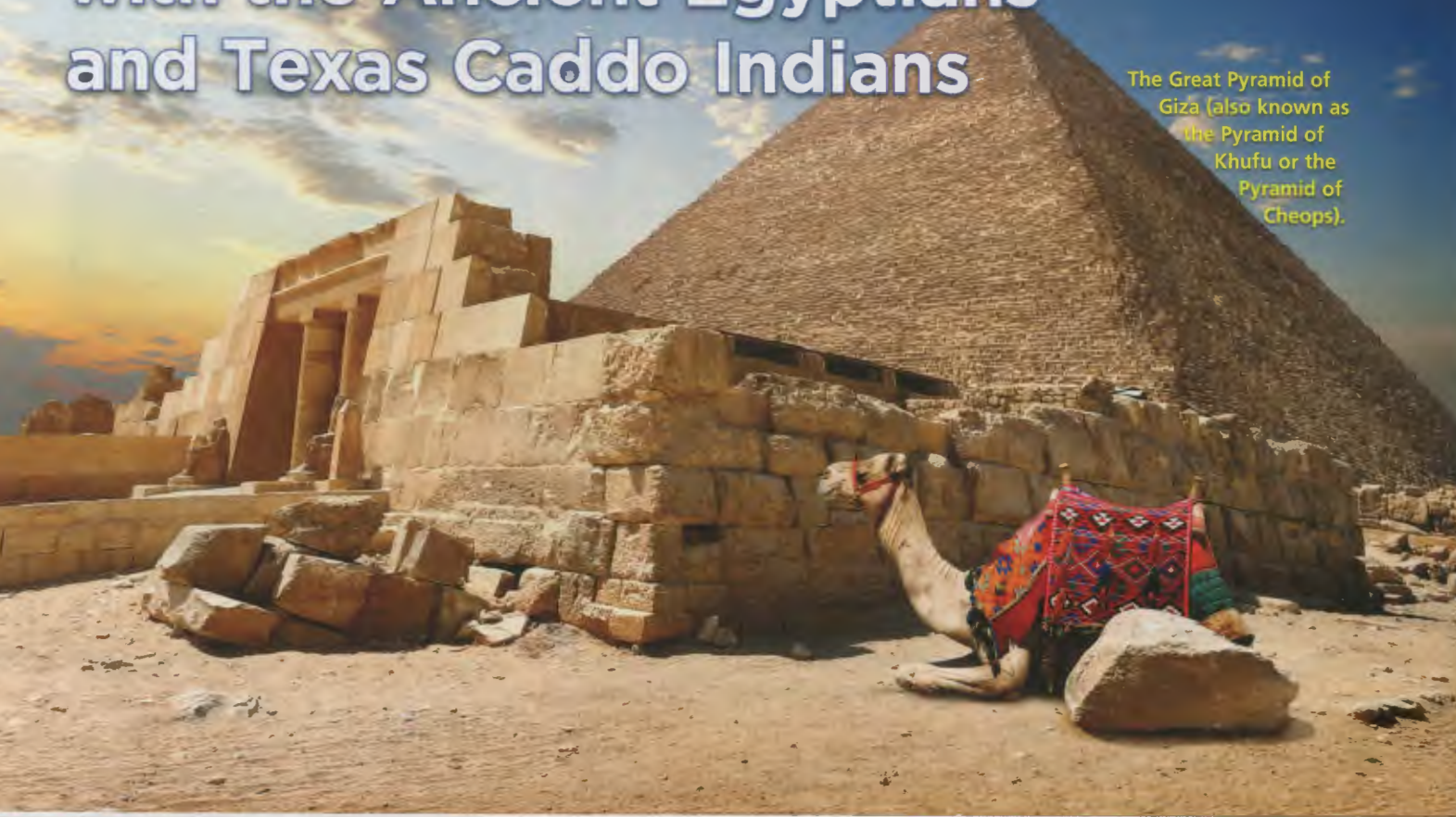


# Finding Cultural Universals with the Ancient Egyptians and Texas Caddo Indians

The Great Pyramid of Giza (also known as the Pyramid of Khufu or the Pyramid of Cheops).



## Who's Buried Where — And Why?

*Carol Schlenk*

**T**housands of years ago, in the arid, desert sands of north Africa, ancient Egyptians built colossal pyramids as tombs to honor their deceased Pharaohs. Several thousand years later — and thousands of miles away, in the lush, green pine forests of east Texas—Caddo Indians built massive earthen mound tombs to honor their dead chieftains. As these two cultures existed so very far apart in time and distance, and could not have shared information about burial practices with each other, how did these similarities in their burial practices arise? Humans burying and honoring their dead, be they Egyptians, Caddos, or modern Americans, is an important societal practice that can illustrate for students the concept of cultural universals.

Cultural universals are those elements of culture that exist worldwide, all

through time. Every society that ever existed included some form of religion, government, art, music, food ways, language, and burial practices. Discovering cultural commonalities, while important in studying Egyptian and Caddo history, can also serve a larger purpose in students' lives especially as they strive to deal with individuals from other cultures.

Our nation has always been a haven for immigrants and in our schools, students and teachers come in contact every day with people from all over the planet. Immigrants entering our country bring with them the elements of the culture they left behind, many of them

speaking a foreign language, practicing an unfamiliar religion, or exhibiting a different style of dress - all of which can make them seem as societal 'others' in their new land. For students, both native and immigrant, dealing with such cultural diversity can be fun and exciting, but it can also be stressful as they try to understand and assimilate elements of each other's cultures.



Mound C exterior: photo courtesy of Texas Historical Commission.

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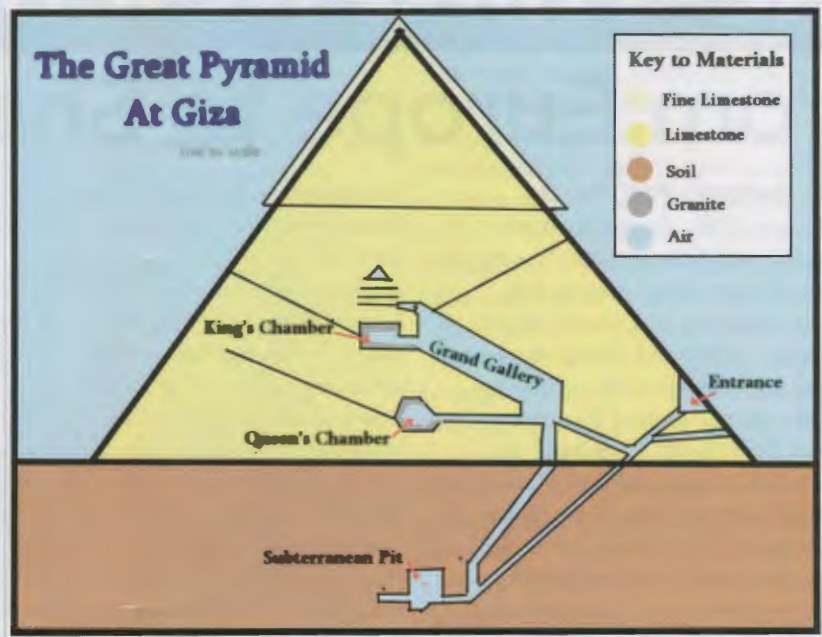
In the classroom, social studies is the perfect medium for dealing with multiculturalism, and studying cultural universals is an important part of any social studies curriculum. Discussions about how different societies celebrate their holidays, how they view education, and how they commemorate birth and death can go a long way toward opening dialogue between American and immigrant students. Reminding students that, as humans, they have more in common with other cultural groups than they have differences teaches them to identify with any given group of people, past or present, including the Egyptians and Caddos.

The Texas Beyond History website offers a new lesson on this topic called, *Who's Buried Where — And Why? Finding Cultural Universals with the Ancient Egyptians and Texas Caddo Indians*. <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/teach/images/human-burials-lesson.html>.

In this lesson, high school world history students define cultural universals and work with a partner to conduct guided research on burial practices of the Caddo Indians in east Texas and the ancient Egyptians at the Great Pyramid of Giza.

After collecting data on the two cultures, students use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast burial practices of the two cultures and use their research data to write a comparison/contrast essay on the topic. In conducting their research, students likely will discover Caddo and Egyptian burial sites share some interesting characteristics that inform historically while nicely illustrating the principle of cultural universals.

For this complete lesson, including colorful, downloadable images, appropriate TEKS, vocabulary and materials lists, as well as teaching instructions, go to [www.texasbeyondhistory.net/teach/images/human-burials-lesson.html](http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/teach/images/human-burials-lesson.html). *Texas Beyond History* ([www.texasbeyondhistory.net](http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net)) is a public education service of the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at the University of Texas at Austin. In this virtual museum you will find information on and



Interior of Giza Pyramid



Mound C interior: photo courtesy Texas Beyond History

images of many different aspects of the cultural legacy of Texas, a legacy spanning at least 13,500 years. Please visit the special sections for Teachers and Kids in our exhibits, especially the large and vividly illustrated online exhibit on the Caddo, *Tejas: Life and Times of the Caddo People*.

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/tejas/index.html>

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