

EXERCISES ON INTERACTIONS AND CONNECTIONS

These outlines of student exercises are designed to provide experience with the concepts and practices of describing interactions and analyzing connections in history. The first two exercises introduce students to *situations* and the *influences* flowing among them. Exercises 3 through 5 lead students through describing *connections* of several sorts. Exercises 6 and 7 address the *interpretation* of connections. Exercise 8 is formally *global*, and invites students to discuss change at the aggregate level.

Exercise 1. Monitoring situations. This is an exercise to develop student skills in keeping track of continuity and change in historical situations. Ask students to select a region, and trace the descriptions of that region over time as presented in their textbook. Possible regions: Iran, the eastern Mediterranean, the western Mediterranean, North China, South China, North India, South India, the East African coast, the West African coast, the Caribbean, etc.

In summarizing the description of their region, students should identify, for each period, the issues discussed, the influences received by the region, and the influences sent from the region. The results of this work will constitute the student's monitoring of a historical situation over time.

In monitoring their regional situation, students will surely encounter great gaps in coverage: time periods and issues for which the text has nothing to say. Ask if they can think of ways to use other parts of the text itself or their imagination to fill in some of the missing information.

Exercise 2. Monitoring influences. This exercise complements the previous exercise by emphasizing student skills in keeping track of the flow of influences.

Trace the flow of manufactures from China to other parts of the world. Especially silk textiles and fine pottery. Where did they go? What situations did they enter?

Trace the spread of Islamic and Buddhist teachings. Where did they come from? Where did they go? What situations did they enter?

Exercise 3. Connections 2: Visual. Show students examples of possibly connected art works, and ask whether they can identify one-way or two-way connections. For example, present examples of Hellenistic sculpture and Buddhist sculpture of the same era; or material culture from various points along the Silk Road; or paintings by Marc Chagall and by Haitian painters of the 1940s and 1950s.

Exercise 4. Connections 3: Audio. Have students select recorded music from several different regions and different styles for a time period such as the 1940s or 1950s, and listen to a range of pieces. Have them focus on the melody, the beat, the instrumentation, and the style of the artists. Ask if they can hear ways in which influences are shared or borrowed among the different pieces.

Then have students listen to another range of pieces from a later time, such as the 1980s or 1990s. Again they should focus on the melody, beat, instrumentation, and artistic style. Ask again if they can hear ways in which influences are shared or borrowed among the different pieces. In addition, ask if they hear ways in which influences from the earlier time period can be heard in these pieces.

Comment: Musical examples are especially good for revealing two-way connections. This exercise could be carried out in a more focused way, comparing rock-and-roll and jazz from the fifties with rock and jazz from the nineties, but my experience is that a more eclectic and international approach works just as well. Students are well informed and skillful at analyzing music.

Exercise 5. Connections 4: Culinary – taste, smell, and presentation. Ask students to give examples from their own lives of cases where two groups have influenced each other's eating habits. Examples can address the foodstuffs, the cooking techniques, and the practices of presentation and dining. Students should be attentive to whether they are describing one-way or two-way connections in cuisine.

Once they have explored their personal experience, students can explore culinary connections in history. Ask if they can locate examples from history where communities have influenced each other's cuisine (foodstuffs, cooking techniques, practices of

presentation and dining). For the examples they identify, how long a time period was required for the connections and changes to take place?

Exercise 6. Interpreting Connections: Connections among societies. Provide students with a list of places (societies) at a given time. Have students select two and identify two-way connections among them. That is, they should identify the influences going in each direction, and the outcomes or changes brought to each place. Do the places become more similar or more different because of the connection?

Sample list of places:

Nations: France, England, Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Germany in the 17th century

Empires: Russian, Qing, Ottoman, Mughal, and Spanish in the 18th century.

Exercise 7. Interpreting Connections: Early modern cultural change. Ask students whether Europe or Asia underwent more change in the course of their early modern cultural interaction. They should answer the question by studying documents showing cultural influences linking Europe and Asia from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. For relevant documents, Unit 5 of the Migration CD includes about ten images and text documents relevant to this exercise (see Patrick Manning, *Migration in Modern World History, 1500-2000* [CD-ROM] (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2000).

Exercise 8. Identifying aggregate change. This exercise is to help students to identify the *global system* and its dynamics. Ask whether the nations of Latin America or Europe have changed in their relationship to each other during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or whether the regions within the United States have changed similarly.