

The Material World and Society Elements

Every culture is made up of two parts. The first part is the **material culture**. The word material has many meanings but in this case it means dealing with the physical world and the things that a society makes and uses. How we live on this Earth is the first part of the definition. We depend on the Earth for our very **basic needs**— air, water and food. Without these, there is no survival and no society. Connected to basic needs are people's need for space, shelter and protection. Without these, instead of dying quickly, it takes a little longer to die. Either way, all of these are the first things we have to have to survive. All together these are called our **physical needs**.

The first important material culture rule is that *everything is connected to everything else on Earth*. Thinking in systems allows us to see how this rule fits to societies. A **system** is something that is made up of two or more parts. If a system is to work well, all the parts have to work right and, in the right way. All of the parts must do their jobs. If one part breaks down, or slows down or stops working, then everything is messed up.

Geography and climate play a huge role in giving us our first level of physical needs. With these, we have agriculture and the foods we eat. Our second level of need is answered in a bit more round about way. Our need for shelter and space causes dress, buildings, population growth and urbanization to happen.

The second rule is that *everything must go somewhere*. Our Earth is, for the most part, a **closed system**. This is a system where nothing really goes out or comes in. Because of this, people have to deal with health issues, garbage collection, sewers that come about because we are trying to have our physical needs met. Methods of transportation, movement and migration all deal with shifting around on our Earth, going from one place to another.

A third rule is that there is *always a consequence for everything which happens*. The Earth influences people and people influence the Earth. We know that pollution and global warming are just some of the negative things happening because of what people do. Human growth has caused trouble for both the Earth and the people on it. 90% of the people in this world are either not able to get their basic needs met or have trouble getting them met all the time. They are under **stress**, or concern or pain caused by not being able to meet their human needs, and are just trying to survive. Sometimes what is best of people is not what is best for the environment.

The second part of our definition of a material culture said that it is the thing that a society makes or and uses. These are the tools, machines, and knowledge of how to make things. In this case, the society elements of history, knowledge, science, economy, jobs, wealth and employment are connected to this part of the definition. All of these things add up to the quality of life a person has. Over the next few days, you will learn more what the various terms mentioned are and discover how Graded students and Brazil in general have their material needs met.