

Louisiana's Culture

In February 1727, a twenty-year-old French woman named Marie Madeleine Hachard boarded a ship bound for Louisiana. Her sailing companions included eleven other nuns of the Ursuline order. This group of women had agreed to serve as nurses in the hospital at New Orleans. They were also eager to provide education to the colony's women and girls.

In her first months in New Orleans, Hachard wrote five long, detailed letters to her father back in France. She told him about the new foods, animals, and plants she had discovered, and she described the people she had met. She commented on how life in the colony was different from life in France and explained what kinds of activities filled her days.

Chapter Preview

People

Marie Madeleine Hachard, Clifton and Cleveland Chenier, Louis Moreau Gottschalk, Louis Armstrong, Antoine "Fats" Domino, Jerry Lee Lewis

Places

Grand Isle, Monroe, West Monroe, Pineville, Natchitoches, Eunice, Thibodaux, Houma, Lafayette, Morgan City, Metairie, Kenner, Covington, Saint-Domingue (Haiti), German Coast, New Iberia, Independence, Ferriday, Opelousas, Mamou, Bastrop, Ville Platte, Breaux Bridge, Crowley, Ponchatoula, Patterson, Chauvin, Dulac, Golden Meadow, Delcambre, Chalmette, Springfield, Tickfaw

Terms

culture, architecture, cultural diffusion, cultural anthropologist, urban, Acadians, ethnic group, African American, Anglo, Creole, Hispanic, Isleño, gumbo, jambalaya, zydeco, blues, jazz, Mardi Gras



In 1734, colonial officials completed the *convent* (a home for nuns) they promised to build for the Ursuline nuns. When it was ready, the Ursulines organized a procession from their temporary home to the new convent. Colonial officials, soldiers, priests, the nuns themselves, their students, and the women of the city all took part. A member of the order described the procession, which took place on a rainy July day:

We went out in order. . . with veils lowered and each carrying a lighted candle of white wax. . . The troops, drawn up on both sides of the streets, marched in perfect order, single file, leaving between them and us a distance of about four feet. The drums and fifes accompanied the songs and made agreeable harmony. The citizens led the procession. Our day pupils followed. Our thirty orphans, each with a candle in her hand, formed a third group. Then came the ladies of the congregation, each with a lighted candle. The community and the clergy terminated the procession. The order was well kept in spite of the mud and the singing of the children.

The Ursuline procession was both a religious ceremony and a celebration. Like Hachard's letters to her father, the description of the procession provides evidence about the people and culture of early Louisiana. Louisiana's culture was new when Hachard wrote to her father. Some aspects of that culture would endure, especially the common use of parades to celebrate or observe important events in the state's diverse communities.

In this chapter, we will consider the meanings and development of culture, explore different regional cultures within the state, learn about some distinct groups of people, and see some of the ways that culture has been expressed through the food, music, and many festivals for which Louisiana is so well known.

Background: Many aspects of Louisiana's unique and diverse culture are on display in New Orleans' Jackson Square.

Signs of the Times



City Nicknames

The city of New Orleans has many nicknames, including The Big Easy, The City That Care Forgot, The Crescent City, and NOLA. Shreveport is sometimes called HOSO, which stands for Hollywood South, because of its recent success in the film industry. Other towns proudly claim to be the Capital of the World in some specialty, like Catfish (Des Allemands), Crawfish (Breaux Bridge), Frog (Rayne), Jambalaya (Gonzales), Strawberry (Ponchatoula), and Zydeco (Opelousas).

Foreign Flavor

Louisiana has adopted many words and phrases from other languages, especially French. Some of the French terms in this chapter include *fais-do-do* (fay doh doh), a Cajun dance party; *zydeco* (ZI duh koh), the lively dance music created by African American Creoles in rural southwest Louisiana; *filé* (fee lay), a powder used to thicken gumbo; *roux* (roo), a mixture of flour and oil that colors and thickens gumbo; *Mardi Gras* (MAR dee grow), the famous celebration before Lent; and *courir* (coo REER), a Mardi Gras celebration in Cajun country.

A New Flag

The 2010 version of the Louisiana state flag has an updated image of our state symbol, the Brown Pelican. This new pelican has three red drops of blood flowing from its breast, which symbolize the state's willingness to sacrifice itself for its citizens. The image goes back to the Middle Ages, when people believed pelicans fed chicks with their blood. Other elements of the flag—the blue background and the state motto, “Union, Justice, Confidence”—remain the same.

Food

In 1929, brothers Bennie and Clovis Martin

wanted to show support for New Orleans streetcar conductors who were on strike. They promised the workers free food at their sandwich shop until the strike ended. When the workers came in for sandwiches made on long loaves of French bread, the brothers would say to each other, “Here comes another poor boy.” Today, a poor boy (or po’ boy) is a sandwich on the traditional bread that is filled with a wide variety of toppings including shrimp, oysters, soft shell crabs, and French fries and gravy. There is even a Vietnamese version called *banh mi*. The poor boy is so beloved there is an annual Po’ Boy Festival on Oak Street in New Orleans.

CODOFIL

French was the language of Louisiana’s founders, but in the twentieth century, very few people in the state still spoke the language. In 1968, the Louisiana legislature established the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) to promote the development, utilization, and preservation of the French language as found and spoken in Louisiana. CODOFIL has online resources for students and also sponsors classes and gatherings around the state for those who wish to learn French or to speak it with others.

American Rose Society

In 1974, the American Rose Society moved its headquarters to Greenwood, Louisiana. Located just west of Shreveport, the headquarters is called the Gardens of the American Rose Center. This 118-acre park has 65 individual rose gardens that include more than 20,000 rose varieties. Visitors can see examples of familiar roses and rare varieties in bloom between April and October. The gardens also host special winter events including Christmas in Roseland.

Section 1

What Is Culture?

As you read, look for

- ▶ the elements that constitute culture;
- ▶ how the blending of customs and ideas creates cultural diffusion;
- ▶ terms: **culture, architecture, cultural diffusion.**

Many people say that Louisiana has a distinct culture or is home to some of the most distinctive groups of people in all of the United States. In order to evaluate this claim, we must first define culture and understand how it helps to make a place or its people special.

Louisiana's Culture

Culture is the way of life of a group of people. Ideas, beliefs, customs, and behavior all help to shape culture. Culture can be expressed and understood through religious beliefs, **architecture** (the art and science of designing and constructing buildings), art, literature, clothing, music, and food. Where people live and what they do for work also contribute to the development of culture. In North Louisiana, where forests and lakes are abundant, hunting and fishing have become an important part of that region's culture. In coastal Louisiana, the abundant fish and seafood have contributed to fishing as an occupation. While it provides a living for some, fishing is for others a favorite means of recreation and way of sharing time with one's family. In the summer months, entire families gather in places like Grand Isle to socialize and spend time fishing in the Gulf or on the bay side of the Island. Visitors from all over the world also come to Grand Isle to fish in the annual Tarpon Rodeo. Wherever they live, people in Louisiana make culture out of the natural resources around them.



Above: Red beans and rice is a classic dish of Louisiana Creole cuisine.

Below: Vermilionville is a living history museum and folklife park in Lafayette. It preserves and represents the Acadian, Native American, and Creole cultures of Louisiana.



Cultural Diffusion

No matter what form it takes, culture is the way people tell stories about themselves and their place in the world. In Louisiana, there are many different cultural stories. In the three centuries since its founding, people from many different backgrounds have come to Louisiana. Often they brought new ideas and practices with them. Over time, these new customs blended with older ideas and practices to form entirely new cultural expressions. This process is called **cultural diffusion**. Sometimes it takes place over a long period of time. Cultural diffusion can also occur across space so that people living in different areas of the same state can spread their cultural practices to one another.

Special FEATURE

Louisiana: A Literary Gold Mine

What do Tennessee Williams, Anne Rice, Alcée Fortier, and Ernest J. Gaines have in common? All four people are best-selling authors with a connection to Louisiana. While Louisiana is certainly famous for its food and music, it is also home to many famous authors, plays, and novels. Tennessee Williams, who moved to New Orleans as an adult, is known for his play *A Streetcar Named Desire*. You might have heard the most famous line from this play, “STELLLLA!” and not even know where it came from. Anne Rice’s work focuses on supernatural topics like vampires. Her most famous novel is *Interview with the Vampire*. Alcée Fortier is known for collecting and recording the Creole tales about *Compair Lapin* (Clever Rabbit) from former slaves. These tales would eventually become part of *The Tales of Uncle Remus* by Georgia writer Joel Chandler Harris. *A Lesson before Dying* is Ernest J. Gaines’s best-known novel. In addition to these authors, other famous writers from Louisiana include James Lee Burke, Arna Bontemps, and Kate Chopin.

Not only has our state produced successful writers, Louisiana has been the setting of many literary works. Some of the famous novels set in Louisiana include *A Confederacy of Dunces* by John Kennedy Toole, *All the King’s Men* by Robert Penn Warren, and *A Free Man of Color* by Barbara Hambly. In recent years, the most famous novels set in Louisiana are the Sookie Stackhouse books by Charlaine Harris. These books are the basis for the television series *True Blood*. Can you add any Louisiana authors, plays, novels, or settings for stories to this list?



Left to right: Tennessee Williams, Anne Rice, Alcée Fortier, Ernest J. Gaines, and Kate Chopin.

Reviewing the Section

1. Define in sentence form: culture, architecture, cultural diffusion.
2. What are some of the ways culture is expressed?
3. Why does Louisiana have such varied and numerous cultural stories?

Section 2

Cultural Regions

As you read, look for

- ▶ the connection between a state’s natural regions and its cultural regions;
- ▶ differences between North and South Louisiana;
- ▶ characteristics of Louisiana’s five cultural regions;
- ▶ major cities and towns in each cultural region;
- ▶ terms: **cultural anthropologist, urban, Acadians.**

Just as Louisiana has natural regions, it also has cultural regions. As you learned in Chapter 1, a region is an area defined by similar features. Natural regions are defined by similar landforms or climate. The geographical features and natural resources of a particular area also contribute to the development of culture. Similarities among the people who settled an area help shape culture too. These similarities lead to shared ways of cooking, speaking, worshipping, making a living, or celebrating life through music and dance.

The boundaries of cultural regions are open to interpretation. **Cultural anthropologists** are scholars who study communities and help identify areas where similar pasts and patterns make a region distinct from its surroundings.

Lagniappe

Anthropology is the science of human beings and especially of their physical characteristics, origin, environment, social relations, and culture. Cultural anthropology is one branch of that science.



Above: Street performers entertain tourists in the New Orleans French Quarter. **Left:** North Toledo Bend State Park is an excellent place for fishing. **Far Left:** Cedric Watson and the Bijou Trio play in a Lafayette park.

Lagniappe

Hunting and fishing are such important parts of Louisiana life that they are mentioned in the Louisiana Constitution of 1974. The last section of Article I of that constitution calls the freedom to hunt, fish, and trap wildlife “a valued natural heritage that shall be forever preserved for the people.”

Some people think that the cultural differences in Louisiana can be understood by dividing the state in half, somewhere around Alexandria. They believe it is sufficient to consider the state’s culture in terms of North and South Louisiana alone.

There are differences between those two areas of the state. South Louisiana was settled by Catholics while North Louisiana was settled by Protestants. South Louisiana is thought to owe its cultural identity to its French and Spanish colonial past. North Louisiana was settled by immigrants from England and English colonies and is thought to have more in common with other parts of the upland South. The differences between North and South Louisiana are not as great as they once were, but they continue to affect aspects of social, political, and economic culture in the two areas.

Some scholars and state officials think that dividing the state and its people into five cultural regions provides a better model for understanding how the physical features and natural resources of an area drew people to those places. Such a division also shows how people created a way of life and culture that is recognizable as a part of each area’s past and present.

MAP 2.1
Louisiana’s Cultural Regions

Map Skill: In which cultural region do you live?



Below: Louisiana typically accounts for 90 percent of the crawfish produced in the United States.



Sportsman's Paradise

The northernmost cultural region of Louisiana, the Sportsman's Paradise, gets its name because its rolling hills, forests, and numerous lakes provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, especially hunting and fishing. In the past, people hunted and fished in order to feed their families. Today, these activities are often done for pleasure rather than out of necessity. The surrounding forests have also provided opportunities for logging and farming.

Most of the people who settled this part of the state were Anglo-Saxon or Celtic, meaning their ancestors came from England, Scotland, or Ireland. Many settlers came into this region after Louisiana became part of the United States in 1803. Because many of its early settlers migrated into this region from nearby states, the area has more in common culturally with the neighboring state of Mississippi than it does with South Louisiana. Culturally, this area is considered to be part of the upland South.

In the nineteenth century, this area was mostly made up of small farms. But Shreveport became an important trade and transportation center after it was founded in 1836. Shreveport-Bossier City is still the region's largest **urban** (city) area. Although the two cities are separated by the Red River and are located in different parishes, they blend together into a single urban culture.

In northeast Louisiana, the most populous area is Monroe-West Monroe. These cities are connected by a bridge across the Ouachita River and are located in Ouachita Parish.

Crossroads

The Crossroads region stretches across the center of the state and takes its name from the way in which its culture serves as a crossroads between the northern and southern portions of Louisiana. Small towns are spread across this region, and many have main streets with small stores, government buildings, and churches. On the outskirts of these towns, old barns remind passersby of the area's agricultural roots.



Above: Recreational sports such as fishing and hunting are popular in the Sportsman's Paradise region. **Left:** The Old Courthouse building in the city of Natchitoches served as the Natchitoches Parish Courthouse from 1896 to 1940. Today it houses the Old Courthouse Museum, a branch of the Louisiana State Museum.

Today, the region's largest urban centers are Alexandria and Pineville. The two towns are separated by the Red River.

The Crossroads region is also home to Louisiana's oldest city. Founded in 1714, Natchitoches is four years older than New Orleans. Originally established as a frontier trading post, today Natchitoches is known for its architecture, charming city center, and beautiful natural surroundings.

Cajun Country

The first European settlers in Cajun Country were **Acadians** (or Cajuns for short)—French Canadians who came to Louisiana beginning in the 1760s. At first, many Acadians were not happy about being sent to the frontier of the Louisiana colony, where conditions were hard and families were sometimes separated. Over time, Acadian families managed to resettle near one another. The Spanish colonial government provided some support for the settlers in their earliest years. The Acadians developed small communities and learned how to make a living in their new environment. By the time Louisiana became a part of the United States, the Acadians had developed a distinctive way of life.

Cajun Country extends across a triangle-shaped area of southwest Louisiana. Within this region, the culture can be further divided into prairie and wetlands areas. On the prairie, the Cajun culture centered on farming and raising livestock, especially cattle. The Acadians who settled nearer the marshes and wetlands made their living as trappers and fishermen. The National Park Service has a Prairie Acadian Cultural Center in Eunice and a Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center in Thibodaux.

The arrival of the oil industry in the twentieth century changed life for many Acadian families. Some Acadians still rely on farming, ranching, fishing, and trapping, but many others have taken jobs in oil production and related industries. The way they work has changed the culture of Acadians over time.

These new industries led to the development of urban areas in modern Cajun Country. They include Houma, Lafayette, Morgan City, and Thibodaux. Lafayette is the largest city in this region and is home to a third National Park Service Acadian Cultural Center. Lake Charles is also included in the region, but its culture is in some ways similar to that of neighboring Texas.

MAP 2.2

Cajun Country

Map Skill: Which parish in Cajun Country is split into two separate parts? Do you know why?





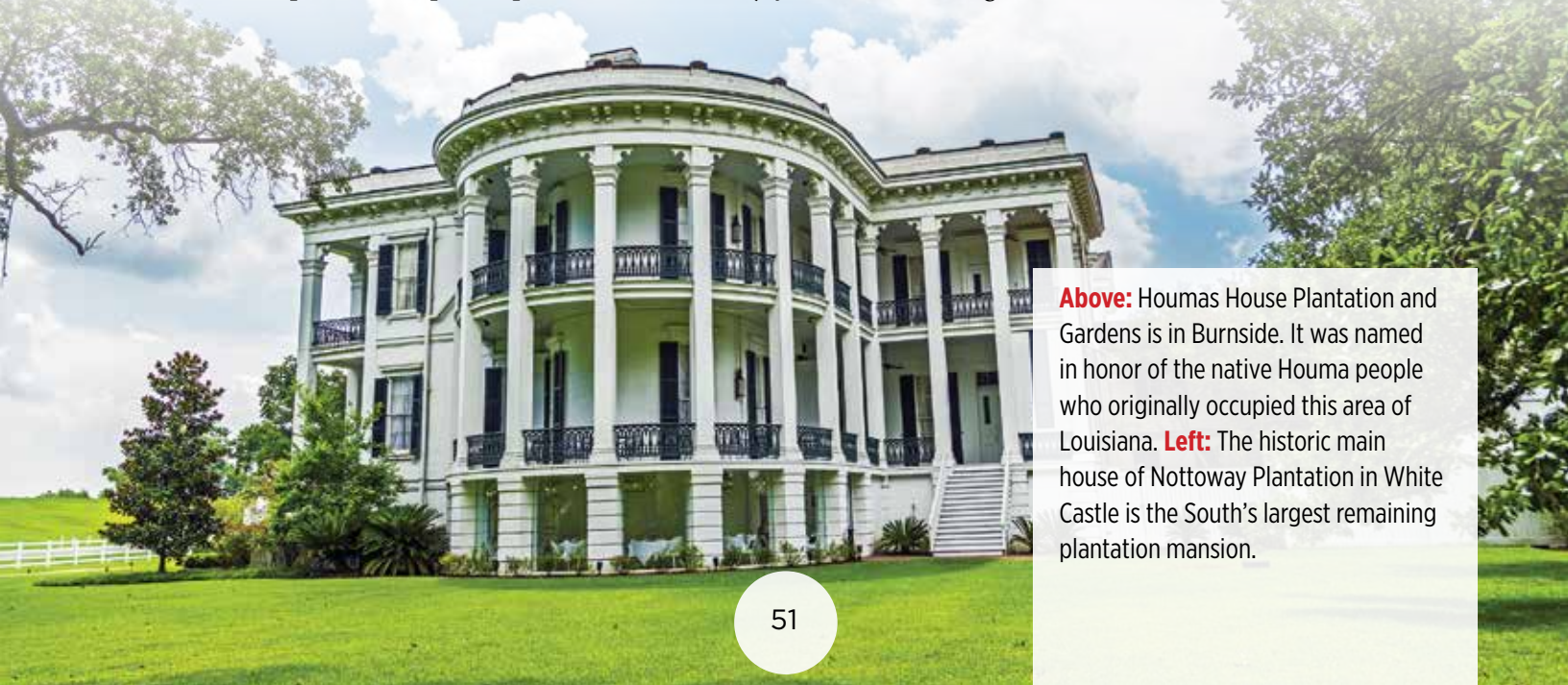
Plantation Country

Plantation Country takes its name from the many plantations that once dominated the region's geography and culture. The profits from growing sugar and cotton on the region's rich farmlands made possible the building of large plantation houses.

This area has more remaining plantation homes than any other similar-size region in the South. Tourists can still visit many of these homes. In some, the focus on life in the main house has been joined by a similar focus on the life and culture of those enslaved people whose work made the plantations profitable.

Today, chemical companies rather than agriculture dominate the areas along the Mississippi River in this region. As with the rise of the oil industry in Acadiana (Cajun Country), this has changed the way people live and work.

Baton Rouge is the state's capital city and the urban center of this region. It is home to the State Capitol and is headquarters for many state agencies. It is also home to Louisiana State University (LSU). Following LSU sports is an important part of the culture of enjoyment in Baton Rouge.



Above: Houmas House Plantation and Gardens is in Burnside. It was named in honor of the native Houma people who originally occupied this area of Louisiana. **Left:** The historic main house of Nottoway Plantation in White Castle is the South's largest remaining plantation mansion.

Right: St. Louis Cathedral, overlooking Jackson Square, is perhaps the most recognizable building in New Orleans.

Below: Mardi Gras parades feature jesters and other colorful characters.

Bottom: Tourists, artists, musicians, and even palm readers mingle in Jackson Square.

Greater New Orleans

New Orleans, the first capital of Louisiana, forms the heart of the Greater New Orleans region. Due to its location near the mouth of the Mississippi River, it had the second-largest port in the nation and was the largest city in the South until the 1860s. Its port remains an important part of its modern economy. Tourism is one of its most important economic activities today.

New Orleans is very different from the rest of Louisiana and from most cities in the United States as well. Some visitors come to see the architectural history of the city's French and Spanish colonial periods in the buildings and streets of the historic French Quarter. Visitors also come to New Orleans to eat in its restaurants, listen to live local music, and participate in some of its well-known cultural celebrations.

Since the 1960s, thriving urban areas have developed both to the west and the north of the city. Jefferson Parish and its cities of Metairie and Kenner are considered part of the Greater New Orleans region. So are cities like Covington and Slidell, which are located across Lake Pontchartrain in St. Tammany Parish. This area is also called the Northshore.



Reviewing the Section

1. Define in sentence form: cultural anthropologist, urban, Acadians.
2. What are the major differences between North and South Louisiana?
3. Name the five cultural regions of our state.



Section 3

People and Culture

As you read, look for

- ▶ the similarities among members of an ethnic group that set them apart from other members of their community;
- ▶ the ethnic groups that have influenced Louisiana's culture;
- ▶ terms: **ethnic group, African American, Anglo, Creole, Hispanic, Isleño.**

In the past as in the present, Louisiana's culture has been shaped by the diversity of its people, the places they have settled, and the ways in which different groups interacted with one another. Just as the state has distinctive cultural regions, it also has groups of people who are distinctive. One way we talk about the differences among groups of people is by using the term "ethnic group."

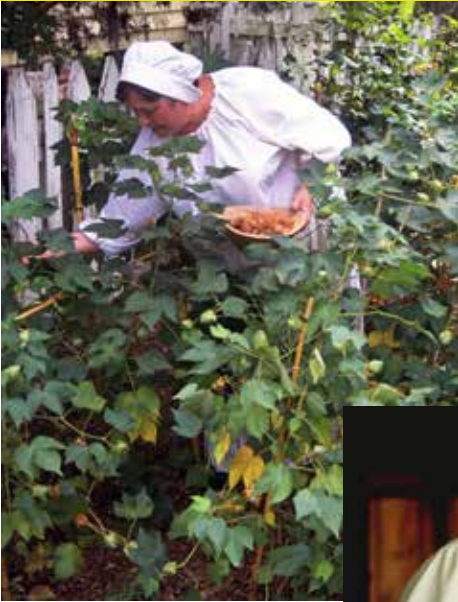
An **ethnic group** is a group of people who are or who consider themselves to be different from other members of their community based on several factors. People from the same ethnic group often come from the same place in the world or share a racial identity. Within an ethnic group, people also tend to exhibit cultural, religious, and *linguistic* (language) similarities. Like the idea of cultural regions we listed previously, ethnic identities sometimes have borders that are debatable. Also, the size and meaning of an ethnic group's identity can change over time.

In the history of Louisiana, some ethnic groups have been particularly influential. The following alphabetized list is designed to introduce to you some of the ethnic groups that have contributed to the state's culture. There are others that could be included. Perhaps you can think of some.

Below: When traditional jazz musician Doc Paulin died in 2007 at age 100, he was honored with a jazz funeral.

Bottom: The jazz funeral is an important part of New Orleans culture. On the way to the cemetery, the band plays sad songs very slowly. On return, the band plays spirited songs like "When the Saints Go Marching In" to celebrate the life of the departed.





Acadians

The French established Louisiana, but the group of French speakers called Acadians did not come directly to Louisiana from France. The Acadians were French migrants and their descendants who lived in a part of New France (now Canada) called Acadie. The English gained control of Acadie in 1710. Because of ongoing disagreements, the English expelled the Acadians from their homes and farms between 1755 and 1763. At first, the Acadians were shipped to different colonies, and many families were separated. Only a small number returned to France.

In the 1760s, several hundred Acadians settled in Louisiana. By 1800, their descendants numbered in the thousands, and they had developed a distinctive way of life that made them a recognizable ethnic group within Louisiana.

On a modern map, twenty-two parishes remain home to Acadian (Cajun) culture. Thousands of Acadians still speak only Cajun French. Other Acadians share a similar *dialect* (way of speaking) that includes words drawn from French, English, and African languages. Acadians have also continued making music and preparing food in ways that make them one of the most recognizable ethnic groups in all of the United States.



Top: An artisan gathers brown cotton at Vermilionville in Lafayette. **Above:** A blacksmith demonstrates his craft at Lafayette's Acadian Village. **Below:** Clementine Hunter was a famous African American folk artist who lived on Melrose Plantation near Natchitoches. She painted this mural called *Baptism* in the 1960s.

African Americans

African American is a relatively modern term. It refers to all people descended from the Africans brought to North America during its colonial and early national periods.

Like the Acadians, the earliest Africans to settle in Louisiana arrived as a result of difficult circumstances. People destined to be slaves were shipped from ports on the west coast of Africa. The first large groups of Africans arrived between 1719 and 1721. They were brought to the colony to serve as its main workforce.



In the decades that followed, more Africans were sent to Louisiana from other parts of the world. Some came to Louisiana after having first served as slaves on French colonial islands in the Caribbean, like Saint-Domingue (modern-day Haiti).

After Louisiana became a part of the United States in 1803, most new slaves came into Louisiana from other states rather than from other countries. Most of these descendants of Africans spoke English and had a different culture than the descendants of slaves brought to Louisiana during the colonial period.

Anglos

The term **Anglo** is used to refer to people who came into Louisiana from the American colonies established by the English. These people were descended from English-speaking migrants to North America. In addition to the English, they include the Irish and Scots-Irish (Scottish people who had settled in Northern Ireland before immigrating to America). Anglos began coming into Louisiana in significant numbers in the 1780s, when Louisiana was a colony of Spain. Their numbers and influence grew after Louisiana became a part of the United States in 1803.

Many Anglos settled in the northern and north-eastern parts of the state where they established small farms and often raised cotton. Anglos spoke English and were Protestant. Both things made them different from the earliest Louisiana settlers.

Other Anglos settled in New Orleans, where they came to dominate business activities like banking and the export of cotton and sugar. They established neighborhoods upriver from the original city (the French Quarter) and were called *Les Américains* (“the Americans”) by the descendants of the people who settled New Orleans.



Above and Left: Wealthy Anglos built beautiful homes in the Garden District of New Orleans. This Robert A. Grinnan house was designed by the same architect who later designed Nottoway Plantation.



Lagniappe

In 1835, a group of Germans led by a couple who called themselves Count and Countess von Leon wanted to establish a religious community, their own “kingdom of heaven,” in North Louisiana. The count died along the Red River, but his wife established the Germantown Colony near Minden and continued to lead it until the colony was *disbanded* (broken up) in 1871.

Top: This photo from the 1930s depicts Creole girls of Plaquemines Parish.

Above: D'Jalma Garnier is a New Orleans Creole fiddler, musician, and composer.



Creoles

The descendants of Louisiana's earliest settlers called themselves Creole, but the term has had several different meanings over time. The word **Creole** originated from the Portuguese term *Criollo*, which meant someone born in the New World. In its earliest usage, Creole referred simply to someone born in a colony rather than in the nation that claimed that colony. In colonial Louisiana, the term Creole was used to describe anyone born in Louisiana whose ancestors were from some other place. Thus, there were French, Spanish, and African Creoles.

Not all the descendants of Africans remained enslaved. Those who gained their freedom were called free people of color. Because many of them shared backgrounds that were French or Spanish as well as African, these free people of color continued to consider themselves Creole.

St. Landry Parish is home to several modern-day Creole of color communities. Some continue to speak French, as their ancestors did during the colonial period. There are also communities in New Orleans where descendants of free people of color identify as Creole. They sometimes have French surnames, but are virtually all English speakers today.

Germans

Small numbers of Germans were among the earliest settlers of Louisiana. Most of them were farmers who settled on the shores of Lake Pontchartrain in an area known as the German Coast. These early Germans did not retain their language and soon blended with the dominant French culture.

More Germans arrived in the nineteenth century. Some of them moved to rural areas in the Louisiana prairies where they established farming communities alongside Acadians. Others moved to New Orleans, where they moved into neighborhoods with other German speakers. They founded their own churches and also established beer gardens, where entire families would gather to sing German songs and socialize after attending Sunday worship services.



Left: A fiddle player entertains at an Isleños festival. **Below:** The Candelaria Basilica is a prominent church in the Canary Islands.

Hispanics

Like many other terms that describe ethnicity, the term “Hispanic” has had several different meanings over time. The first large numbers of **Hispanics** (Spanish-speaking people) came when Louisiana became a Spanish colony in the 1760s.

The Spanish government focused on population growth and brought Spanish-speaking people from two of their other colonial possessions. The most prominent group came from the Canary Islands. Over time, many of these immigrants from the Canary Islands settled in St. Bernard Parish. Today they are known as **Isleños**, and members of this group have worked hard to keep their cultural traditions alive. One way they have done so is to pass down the ancient tradition of singing *décimas*—ten-verse songs that convey stories about daily life. Some tell stories about the problems faced by the earliest Isleño immigrants. Modern *décimas* focus on activities like crab-fishing, a common pursuit in the waters surrounding St. Bernard Parish.

Another group of Spanish speakers came from the Málaga region of Spain. Most of them settled in southwest Louisiana. Members of this group founded the city of New Iberia, named after the Iberian Peninsula on which the nation of Spain is located.

In the twentieth century, the term “Hispanic” came to mean a Spanish-speaking person of Latin American descent who migrated to the United States. In the 1960s, a group of Cuban exiles settled in New Orleans after Fidel Castro led a revolution that took control of that island nation. In more modern times, many Spanish speakers have come into Louisiana from the Latin American countries of Mexico and Honduras.



Lagniappe

The Canary Islands consist of thirteen islands off the northwest coast of Africa that are a self-governing part of Spain. The islands were not named for the canary bird; just the opposite—the canary bird was named for the islands! The islands’ name is thought to have something to do with dogs (or with seals that looked like dogs).

Lagniappe

Central and South America are often called Latin America because Latin-based languages—Spanish and Portuguese—are spoken there. For that reason, their people are often called Latinos.

Italians

Italians began arriving in Louisiana in the nineteenth century. Most of them came after 1860. Many Italians came from rural areas and had farming experience. Those who could afford to do so set up farms outside New Orleans and brought their produce into the city to sell. A large group of their descendants live in Independence in Tangipahoa Parish.

Native Americans

At the time of French settlement, there were seven distinct groups of Native Americans who lived in what is now the state of Louisiana. Each of those groups shared important cultural or linguistic similarities. Today there are four Native American groups recognized as sovereign Indian nations by the U.S. government. Those sovereign nations are the Chitimacha, the Jena Band of Choctaw, the Coushatta, and the Tunica-Biloxi.

Several other groups of Native Americans from Louisiana have sought federal recognition but have so far failed to achieve it. The largest of these groups is the United Houma Nation, which claims more than sixteen thousand members scattered across a six-parish area of coastal southeast Louisiana.

Other Ethnic Groups

Numerous other groups have come to Louisiana over time. In the nineteenth century, small numbers of Chinese came into the state. Some worked in agriculture while others were fishermen. There were enough Chinese immigrants in New Orleans around 1900 that they lived in a small community called Chinatown.

Many Filipino immigrants (people from the Philippine Islands in the Pacific Ocean) became shrimp fisherman in the nineteenth century. Immigrants from Vietnam are the most recent arrivals to become part of the culture of the wetlands. Many of them work as fisherman in coastal areas. Entire communities of Vietnamese immigrants live in New Orleans East and St. Bernard Parish, where they run businesses and worship in Catholic churches or Buddhist temples.

Croatian immigrants from Eastern Europe lived near the Adriatic Sea before immigrating. Once in Louisiana, they gravitated toward coastal areas and helped develop the oyster industry. Today, a small number of their descendants live in Plaquemines Parish, where they still raise and harvest oysters.



Above: The ASEANA Spring Festival, a celebration of Asian culture, takes place in Shreveport's ASEANA Asian Gardens.

Reviewing the Section

1. Define in sentence form: Anglo, Creole, Isleño.
2. What are some characteristics that people of an ethnic group share among themselves?
3. What are the four Native American groups recognized as sovereign Indian nations by the U.S. government?

Section 4

Forms of Cultural Expression

As you read, look for

- ▶ the dishes that make up Louisiana’s unique food culture;
- ▶ origins of the varied music traditions found in our state;
- ▶ how Louisiana’s people celebrate their culture and heritage through festivals;
- ▶ terms: **gumbo, jambalaya, zydeco, blues, jazz, Mardi Gras.**

Culture is expressed in many ways. Sometimes we can locate those similar cultural expressions in regions or in groups of people. Families are also important sites for the creation and preservation of cultural activities. Families often have their own unique cultural traditions and share them with others. One of the most common ways people share their culture and traditions in Louisiana is through food.

Food

Food is an everyday necessity. We must eat in order to live. Some people say that in Louisiana we like food so much we live to eat! When Marie Madeleine Hachard wrote letters from Louisiana back to her father in France, she described many of the foods the colonists ate. They included “rice with milk, little wild beans, meat and fish.” She especially liked the oysters and carp and the peaches and figs brought to New Orleans from the farms outside the city.



Louisiana food comes in many forms and is often spiced up with pepper sauce.

Her descriptions do not yet describe a distinct food culture. The people who came to Louisiana brought traditions of food preparation with them. Over time, they combined those techniques from home with local ingredients to create new dishes that have become a part of Louisiana's culture.

Gumbo is one of the foods most commonly associated with Louisiana. It is a thick soup or stew usually prepared with meats, like duck and sausage, or with fresh local seafood. There is even a vegetarian version called gumbo z'herbes. All gumbos are served over rice. The food traditions immigrants brought with them shaped the way gumbo is prepared and eaten today. The French brought the tradition of *roux* (a thickening agent made from oil or butter and flour cooked together). Roux gives gumbo its distinctive thickness and dark, rich color. Africans brought okra with them and they knew that it, too, could thicken soups. In fact, one African word for okra was *gombo*, and this is how many people think gumbo got its name. Native Americans ground sassafras leaves into a spicy powder called *filé*. All of these methods of thickening and flavoring gumbo are still used today.



Jambalaya is another food created in Louisiana. Jambalaya always includes rice and has some combination of meat, seafood, and sausage. Some people put tomato in it and others do not. Many people believe the Spanish who came to Louisiana are responsible for the beginnings of this dish because it is similar to a Spanish dish called *paella*.



Crawfish is another food associated with Louisiana. Eating crawfish began in the swamps of South Louisiana. At one time, it was considered a food only for the poor. Today, people love these "mudbugs" and gather in large groups of family and friends for crawfish boils. Sometimes they also throw crabs, shrimp, corn, potatoes, and sausage into the boil.

Oysters, fish, and shrimp harvested or caught in and around the Gulf of Mexico are also popular in Louisiana. These foods are prepared in many different ways. Louisiana seafood is also shipped to other states where chefs prepare dishes inspired by the foods created by people of Creole and Cajun descent.

Perhaps you and your classmates can think of other distinctive Louisiana foods. If so, can you trace their origin to a particular region or group of people?



Top Right: A bowl of shrimp, chicken, and sausage gumbo, served over rice. **Middle:** Jambalaya with chicken, sausage, rice, shrimp, celery, and spices. **Above:** A crawfish boil. **Right:** Alma Griffin serves writer and TV personality Ronnie Virgets some ice-cold oysters on the half shell at Casamento's Restaurant in New Orleans.



Music

Louisiana's musical traditions are as rich and varied as its food culture. Early explorers described the music created by Native Americans who played drums and sang songs in their native languages. French immigrants brought the music of Catholic worship with them. Africans brought songs, drumming, and dancing from their homelands. Over time, those earliest musical traditions merged and changed. Most modern forms of Louisiana music can be traced to the state's different regions and ethnic groups.

Country Music

Country music is often associated with the Sportsman's Paradise and Crossroads regions of the state. In part, this is because so many of this area's settlers migrated into Louisiana from the nearby states where country music originated. Another reason is because of a radio program called *The Louisiana Hayride*, which was broadcast from the Municipal Auditorium in downtown Shreveport. Between 1948 and 1960, this weekly radio show presented live performances by many well-known country music stars like Hank Williams and Johnny Cash. As music changed, *The Hayride* also featured performers like Elvis Presley, who played a new form of music called rockabilly.

Cajun Music and Zydeco

The Cajun Country region of Louisiana is known for two types of music. Descendants of the Acadians created Cajun music. The early Cajuns often had dance parties where friends and family came together in a single home. The parties went on late into the night. When the children were sleepy, they were put on blankets on the bedroom floor and told to go to sleep, which in French is *fais-do-do*. This became a nickname for these parties, and today *fais-do-do* means a Cajun dance party.

Below: Country music artist Tim McGraw (left) and folk, rock, blues, and country singer and songwriter Lucinda Williams (right). **Bottom Images (from left to right):** Buckwheat Zydeco at Festival International, Rosie Ledet, Amanda Shaw at the 30th Annual Mudbug Madness, and Lee Benoit.



Lagniappe

The expression *do-do* is short for *dormir*, the French word for "to sleep." *Fais-do-do* is the equivalent of the American English phrase, "Go beddy-bye."



Lagniappe

The name “zydeco” is thought to come from a modified pronunciation of the French phrase *les haricots* (“the beans”), which was part of a popular song title, “Les Haricots Sont Pas Salés” (“The Beans Are Not Salty”).

Traditional Cajun songs were sung in French. Cajun bands feature a fiddle and an accordion. Although the accordion was created in the 1840s, Acadians only began to incorporate it into their music in the 1880s, after Germans immigrated into this region and introduced the instrument. This is an example of cultural diffusion.

Zydeco is the other form of music that began in southwest Louisiana. It was created by black Creoles who lived in this rural region. Zydeco bands feature fiddles and accordions, and the music is lively, upbeat, and inspires dancing. In the 1950s, brothers Clifton and Cleveland Chenier became well-known zydeco performers. After losing his job in the oil industry in Texas, Clifton began playing music full time. He also designed a corrugated metal plate that hung around the shoulders of its player. It is called a *frottoir*, and it replaced the washboard early zydeco bands used for percussion. Cleveland Chenier mastered the *frottoir* and Clifton, who sang and played the accordion, became known as the King of Zydeco.



The Blues

The Plantation Country region of Louisiana is associated with a type of music called the blues. Many of the nation's best-known blues musicians were born and raised in this part of Louisiana.



Blues music has its origins in the songs and chants created and sung by slaves and later sharecroppers as they worked in the fields of the region's plantations. In the twentieth century, the guitar and harmonica became the instruments associated with the blues. Blues musicians adopted the electric guitar in the 1940s, adding another dimension to the deep, soulful sound of blues music.



Above: Lead Belly played the twelve-string guitar. **Above Right:** Lazy Lester plays a form of blues music called “swamp blues.” **Right:** Clarence Edwards and his band played at the Louisiana Folklife Festival.

New Orleans Music

In New Orleans, different groups of people and their musical traditions combined to create different types of music. Louis Moreau Gottschalk was born in New Orleans in 1829. By the 1860s, he had become the world's best-known pianist, and "Bamboula" was his most famous composition. It was based on his memories of the drumming and chants of slaves he heard near his childhood home.

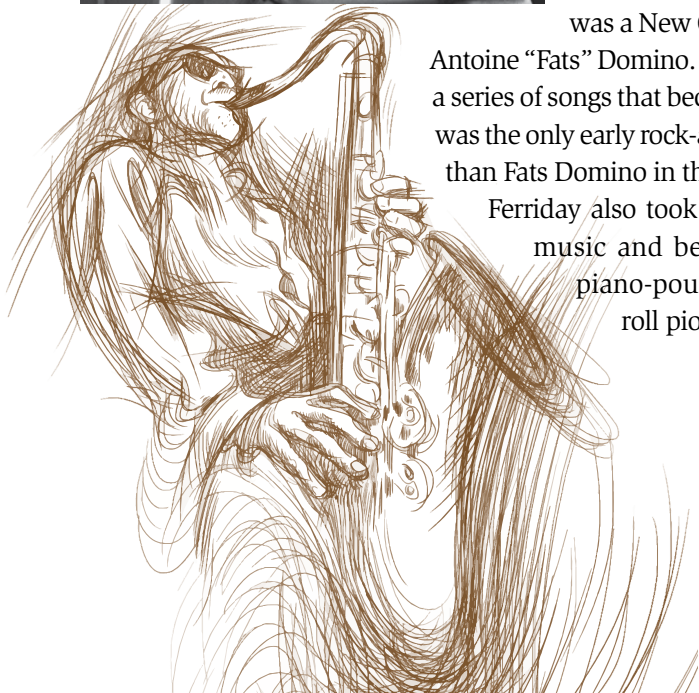
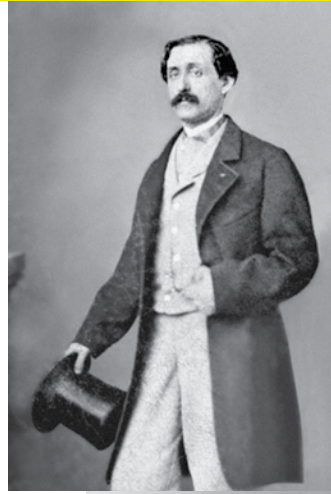
At the beginning of the twentieth century, African American and Italian American musicians in New Orleans gradually created a new form of music. Piano players and brass band musicians, especially trumpet players, led the way in creating songs and rhythms that were entirely new. This unique music came to be known as **jazz** and is now

recognized as an important American art form. When they migrated to other places, New Orleans-born musicians like Louis Armstrong carried the music with them to cities like Chicago, New York, and later to the entire world. Jazz itself has changed over time, but it continues to be one of the most celebrated forms of music created in this state.

In the 1940s, musical traditions merged again in the city leading to some of the earliest recordings of songs classified as both rhythm and blues and rock and roll. The best-known performer of these songs

was a New Orleans-born musician named Antoine "Fats" Domino. In the 1950s, Domino recorded a series of songs that became top-ten hits. Elvis Presley was the only early rock-and-roll artist to have more hits than Fats Domino in the 1950s. Jerry Lee Lewis from

Ferriday also took up rock-and-roll music and became a famous piano-pounding rock-and-roll pioneer.



Top: Louis Moreau Gottschalk. **Above:** Louis Armstrong played the cornet and trumpet and was also known for his raspy singing voice. **Left:** Fats Domino is a rhythm-and-blues and rock-and-roll artist who helped define the New Orleans Sound. **Below:** Jerry Lee Lewis of Ferriday is a rock-and-roll and country-music pianist and singer-songwriter.



Special FEATURE

Preservation Hall: Preserving New Orleans Jazz

One building in New Orleans that can claim to have helped save and preserve New Orleans jazz is Preservation Hall, located in the French Quarter. Since it was built in 1750, Preservation Hall has served as a private home, tavern, inn, photo studio, and art gallery, before it became a music hall on June 10, 1961. The intent of Allan and Sandra Jaffe, the Hall's founders, was to preserve traditional New Orleans jazz from the rising popularity of modern jazz and rock music.

Today, Preservation Hall is known not only for its live music but also for the Preservation Hall Jazz Band that tours around the United States. Preservation Hall has live New Orleans jazz concerts every night and is open to all ages. Many of the musicians who play at the Hall are in their 70s and 80s, but younger musicians perform at the Hall as well. Preservation Hall has hosted concerts by other performers like My Morning Jacket, Tom Waits, and the Allman Brothers.

Are you interested in learning how to play New Orleans jazz? Preservation Hall has an education program that is open to students ages ten through seventeen. Students who take part in the free program must be able to read music and play a traditional jazz

instrument, like the trumpet, clarinet, tuba, saxophone, trombone, or drums. Members of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band run the program, which not only is fun but also helps preserve this historic music for future generations. What instrument would you enjoy learning to play?



Above: Preservation Hall closed in the fall of 2005 in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The band went on tour until the Hall opened again in 2006. **Left:** The Preservation Hall Jazz Band performs on stage every night. **Below:** Preservation Hall musicians perform outdoors on the sidewalk.



Festivals

Festivals are an important way people in Louisiana share and celebrate all aspects of their culture and heritage. Every year there are more than three hundred festivals in the state's cities and towns. There is even a calendar dedicated to listing all of the festivals that take place throughout the state each year.



Musical Celebrations

There are dozens of festivals that celebrate the state's musical forms. Attending one of these festivals is a fun way to learn about Louisiana music. The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival (Jazz Fest) takes place the last weekend in April and the first weekend in May each year and features many types of Louisiana music and musicians. Other Louisiana music festivals focus on a single type of music. They include the Baton Rouge Blues Festival in April and the Zydeco Extravaganza in Opelousas in May. In August, there are Cajun Music Festivals in both Mamou and Lafayette.



Festivals of Agriculture and Industry

Early festivals were developed to celebrate religious holidays or to honor particular saints. Many festivals also have their roots in the harvest celebrations that took place in agricultural communities. Some festivals in Louisiana continue this tradition of celebrating the crops or food products associated with a given place. Examples include the Andouille Festival in LaPlace, the Cotton Festivals in Bastrop and Ville Platte, the Crawfish Festival in Breaux Bridge, the Rice Festival in Crowley, and the Strawberry Festival in Ponchatoula.



Top: Festival International, Lafayette.
Second: Festivals Acadiens et Créoles, Lafayette. **Third and Left:** Jazz & Heritage Festival, New Orleans.
Fourth: A musician plays the frottoir at the Zydeco Festival, Plaisance.

Below: Mardi Gras Indians are lined up to join a parade in New Orleans.

Other festivals celebrate the kind of work people do or the industries that provide jobs to people in the local area. The Cypress Sawmill Festival celebrates Patterson's history as a logging town. The Blessing of the Fleet has become a festival that honors the fishermen in coastal areas. Chauvin, Dulac, and Golden Meadow all celebrate a Blessing of the Fleet in April. Delcambre and Chalmette have theirs in August. Morgan City hosts the Shrimp and Petroleum Festival each year, which celebrates both its seafood industry and its history as a location for oil production.

Ethnic Festivals

Some festivals honor the backgrounds of the people who settled in an area. There are more than a dozen Cajun Festivals that celebrate the culture and history of the Acadians. There is a Greek Festival in New Orleans, a Hungarian Celebration in Springfield, and festivals that honor Italian heritage in Tickfaw, Kenner, and Independence.

Mardi Gras Celebrations

Mardi Gras, which means "Fat Tuesday" in French, is the state's most famous festival. Its religious associations are often overlooked, but the Carnival season begins on the religious holiday of Epiphany (January 6th or Twelfth Night) and continues through Fat Tuesday. The next day, Ash Wednesday, is the first day of Lent, a period of solemn religious observation leading up to Easter.

The earliest Mardi Gras parades were disorganized, but by the 1870s, *krewe*s (individual parading organizations) had begun to sponsor individual parades and balls at specific times during the Carnival season. Today, there are Mardi Gras parades in most Louisiana cities. The largest parade schedule is found in New Orleans where dozens of *krewe*s sponsor elaborate parades during the two weeks leading up to Mardi Gras Day. Most New Orleans *krewe*s require their riders to wear masks, and all riders throw beads and other trinkets to the large crowds. Other cities like Baton Rouge have parades, but the float riders are not required to wear masks.

Lagniappe

Some of the most colorful participants in New Orleans Mardi Gras parades are the Mardi Gras Indians. These "Indians" are actually African Americans who form tribes that march through the streets on Mardi Gras Day. They wear elaborately hand-beaded and feathered costumes known as "suits" and sing chants as they travel in search of rival tribes.





Left: Rural Cajun Mardi Gras celebrations are called *courirs*.

In rural areas of southwest Louisiana, there is a form of Mardi Gras celebration called the *courir*. Community members wear masks, ride horses, and go from house to house collecting the ingredients for a communal gumbo. At the end of the day, the entire community gathers to share in the feast.

Hundreds of thousands of people come to Louisiana each year to take part in Mardi Gras celebrations. The elaborate parades hardly resemble the modest procession the Ursuline nuns formed when they walked to their new convent in 1734. Even so, there is a cultural similarity between the two kinds of parades and the many ways in which Louisiana's people have used parades to honor special occasions or to celebrate their cultural heritage.

Sharing Our Joy

Louisiana is known worldwide for its numerous festivals and for the cultural forms its people have created. Sometimes we celebrate with people from our city, our ethnic group, or our family. Other times we honor our ancestors, places of origin, or the food, products, or cultural forms produced in our region.

Whatever the reason or occasion, the state's people are known for the many joyful ways they celebrate life. Those descended from the French would call that *joie de vivre* (joy of living). This idea of *joie de vivre* can be used to describe the celebrations developed and continued by people from all parts of Louisiana.

Reviewing the Section

1. Define in sentence form: gumbo, zydeco, Mardi Gras.
2. How has jazz come to be known all over the world?
3. Which Louisiana festivals honor crops and food products? Where are these festivals held?

Lagniappe

A typical costume for a *courir* rider consists of a wire screen mask that is shaped to look like a face, a colorful patchwork suit, and a pointed hat known as a *capuchon*.

Often small metal bells are sewn into the colorful costume.

Chapter Review

Chapter Summary

Section 1: What Is Culture?

- Culture is the way of life of a group of people. Ideas, beliefs, customs, and behavior help to shape culture. It is expressed through religious beliefs, architecture, art, literature, clothing, music, and food.
- People from many different backgrounds have settled in Louisiana. Over time, their new ideas and practices blended with older ideas and practices to form new cultural expressions. This process is called cultural diffusion.

Section 2: Cultural Regions

- Cultural regions are shaped by similarities among the people who settled an area including ways of cooking, speaking, worshipping, making a living, dancing, or making music.
- Some people think that, culturally, Louisiana can be divided in half—North and South Louisiana. Another model divides the state into five cultural regions: Sportsman’s Paradise, Crossroads, Cajun Country, Plantation Country, and Greater New Orleans.
- The northernmost cultural region, Sportsman’s Paradise, gets its name from the hills, forests, and lakes that provide outdoor recreation. People of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic ancestry settled there.
- The Crossroads region is in the center of the state. This region’s culture serves as a crossroads between northern and southern Louisiana. It has small towns and is home to our oldest city, Natchitoches.
- Acadians—French Canadians who came to Louisiana beginning in the 1760s—settled Cajun Country. This region extends across a triangle-shaped area of southwest Louisiana. It is further divided into prairie and wetlands areas.
- Plantation Country is named for the many plantations that once dominated here. Today, chemical companies dominate areas along the Mississippi River. Baton Rouge, the region’s urban center, is the state capital and home of Louisiana State University.
- New Orleans and the surrounding urban areas make up the Greater New Orleans region. Tourism is important here. People are drawn to the French and Spanish colonial architecture, restaurants, music, and other celebrations.

Section 3: People and Culture

- Several ethnic groups have settled in Louisiana. Ethnic groups tend to have cultural, religious, and linguistic similarities.
- In the 1760s, several hundred Acadians settled in Louisiana and developed a distinctive way of life including their language, food ways, and music.
- African Americans are descendants of Africans forcibly moved to North America during colonial and early national periods and brought to Louisiana to serve as its main workforce. Some African Americans came here after having served as slaves on French colonial islands in the Caribbean.
- Anglos refers to people who came to Louisiana, especially northern Louisiana, from the American colonies established by the English. This ethnic group also included the Irish and Scots-Irish.
- Originally, the term Creole described anyone born in Louisiana whose ancestors were from some other place. Later, free people of color, who often shared backgrounds that were French or Spanish as well as African, continued to consider themselves Creole.
- Small numbers of Germans settled near Lake Pontchartrain early on. In the early 19th century, more Germans arrived and established farms in our prairies or settled in New Orleans.
- The first influx of Hispanic settlers occurred in the Spanish colonial era. Isleños from the Canary Islands settled in St. Bernard Parish. People from Spain’s Málaga region founded New Iberia.
- Italians immigrated to Louisiana in the late 19th century. Many of their descendants live in Tangipahoa Parish.
- At the time of French settlement, seven distinct groups of Native Americans lived in what is now the state of Louisiana.

Section 4: Forms of Cultural Expression

- Louisiana is known for distinctive and delicious food like gumbo, jambalaya, crawfish, and seafood.
- Our rich musical tradition includes country, Cajun, zydeco, the blues, and jazz music.
- Louisianians celebrate our cultural heritage through over 300 festivals including Mardi Gras, the most famous of all.

Activities for Learning

Understanding the Facts

1. Identify the seven expressions of culture listed in this chapter.
2. What term refers to the blending of new customs with older ideas and practices over time?
3. In what ways does South Louisiana contrast with North Louisiana?
4. What are the five cultural regions of Louisiana?
5. What gives the northernmost cultural region of Louisiana its name?
6. What are the two largest urban centers in the Crossroads region?
7. In Cajun Country, on what economic activity was life on the prairie centered? Life on the marshes and wetlands?
8. What profitable crops provided the wealth to build large plantation houses in Plantation Country?
9. Which five cities are considered part of Greater New Orleans?
10. Which languages form the Acadian dialect?
11. From what places were Africans forcibly removed and shipped to North America?
12. In what business activities were the Anglos who first settled in New Orleans involved?
13. What was the original meaning of the term Creole?
14. From which area do the Isleños trace their ancestry?
15. Which cultures have influenced the ingredients in gumbo?
16. How did Cajun dance parties get the name *fais-do-do*?
17. Which religious observance begins the day following Mardi Gras?



Developing Critical Thinking

Identify two distinct ethnic groups living in Louisiana. How have these two groups contributed to the state's culture?

Writing across the Curriculum

Food is one of the major cultural influences in Louisiana. Research one of Louisiana's ethnic groups and create a "recipe" card. On one side of the card, identify the ethnic group, the name of the dish, and its origins. On the other side, list instructions for making the dish. (Include a list of ingredients and measurements.)

Exploring Louisiana on the Internet

Read the article on the Mardi Gras Indians and watch the video, "The History of the Creole Wild West," at this website: www.pbs.org/wnet/tavissmiley/tsr/new-orleans-been-in-the-storm-too-long/mardi-gras-indians-battling-on-st-josephs-night/. Why did African Americans in New Orleans create their own carnival? Why did the "Indians" honor Native Americans?

Building 21st-Century Skills: Map Skills

For your vacation, you want to visit the birthplaces of some of Louisiana's musicians and some music festivals. However, you have limited time and money, so you can travel no more than 600 miles. Visit as many birthplaces and festivals as possible until you have used your allotted mileage.

Before departing, plan your trip by creating a travel itinerary. Consult this chapter and compile a list of birthplaces for the following Louisiana musicians (Louis Armstrong, Fats Domino, Jerry Lee Lewis) and the locations for the following music festivals (Zydeco Extravaganza and the Cajun Music Festivals). You will need a state highway map to design your route. Create a table with five columns labeled "Departure City," "Destination City," "Route Taken," "Birthplace/Festival," and "Mileage Used." Complete the table for each leg of your journey. Include a detailed account of the route taken to your next destination and the mileage for the return home.

This nineteenth-century Cajun school is on display at Vermilionville.