“Reading Our World and Exploring Perspectives: Identity and Culture” Essential Questions

For all of human history, individuals and groups of people have worked to form their identities. Some elements of our identity are unique and specific to each of us. Other elements are shared and help us feel like part of a group. These elements are all part of our culture. Yet, we don’t often pause to ask, What is culture? How does our culture influence the way we view our world? In our inquiry unit, we will explore the following essential questions:

- What is culture? How do various individuals, communities, and groups describe the characteristics of “culture”?
  - What are characteristics of culture? How do these characteristics influence and contribute to culture?
  - When are cultural characteristics seen as positive, and when are they seen as negative?

- What is cultural identity? How does my culture influence identity?
  - What is my own cultural identity in relation to my family and community?
  - How is American culture described through various forms of media, in my school, and in my community?

- How do these visions and elements of culture influence my life?
  - What are the artifacts of my culture (imagery, music, food, clothing, ceremonies, pop culture icons, etc.)?
  - How do I imagine these artifacts and characteristics of culture will continue to influence my life in the future?

In pursuit of answers to these questions and others, we will

- Identify and explain characteristics (e.g., freedom, individualism, the common good) that shape culture in families, in communities, and in the United States
- Select and analyze various cultural artifacts (e.g., food, music, clothing) that represent these characteristics of culture
- Recognize and elaborate upon various perspectives related to culture, broadly, and related to individual cultural identity specifically