

Genealogy Beyond BMD

Martha Wallace – 25 January 2025

Proposal

Do you wonder what the everyday life of an ancestor was like? Do you wonder why certain things happened – a move, a death, a marriage? How were their lives shaped by outside influences and how were they a part of the world around them? How did they take part in the needs and development of their community?

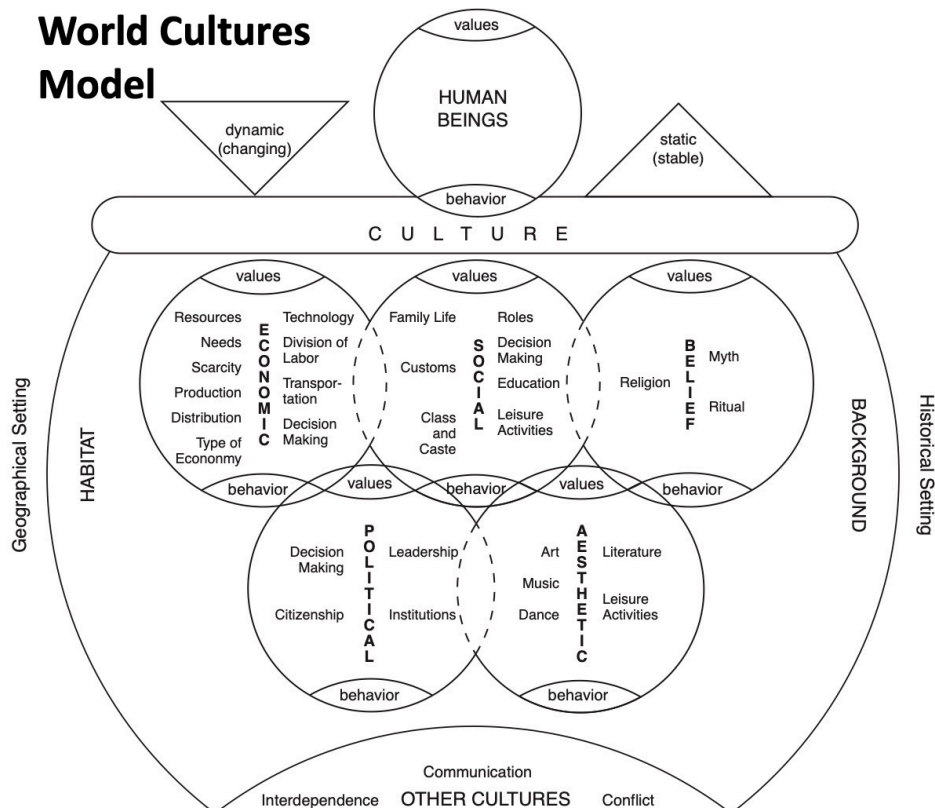
As you research **B**irth, **M**arriage, and **D**eath information for your ancestors, look beyond the bounds of the family group sheet to learn about other facets of your ancestors' lives. Build a well-rounded picture of their lives and add depth to your family story using the World Cultures Model, created at Stanford in 1986 and used in history classrooms to help students understand the world beyond just famous people and battles. This same strategy can expand your family history – beyond just **BMD**.

There's more to history than famous people and battles – and most of us don't have any famous people or battles built in to our family history. Even if we do, there's more to the story than that. Go beyond the family group sheet and create a story. While any story that you create about those early days will not be perfect or [completely true in every case], a good story can give us a feel for the life in that place and time.

This strategy can be applied to genealogy to give a well-rounded picture of a people in a time and place. The idea is to include something from each of the aspects of the World Cultures Model to create a well-rounded picture of a culture, or more specifically in our case, an ancestor.

The World Cultures Model

A basic plan can help you create a wider picture of life at the time. This World Cultures Model used in history classrooms helped students understand the world beyond what they saw on TV and in movies. An important part of the model is interdependence, shown by the overlapping circles. You don't have to make a poster with overlapping circles; just find something about each of the main aspects to include in your story and you will learn more about your family and enjoy a more complete picture of the world they lived in.



Topics for the World Cultures Model

Here are some samples from my 1888 North Texas story.
Look for these aspects for your ancestors!

Geographical setting – Land forms, mountains, rivers, lakes, natural resources, climate.

There was a blizzard on the plains in January (the Schoolhouse Blizzard or the Children's Blizzard) and one on the East Coast in March.

The winter of 1888 was a cold and snowy winter.



Historical setting – Past events

The Civil War had divided Texas.

Many Confederate soldiers moved to Texas after the war.



Economic – Scarcity, production, distribution, transportation, resources, technology, division of labor

Chicory roots made a good substitute for scarce coffee.

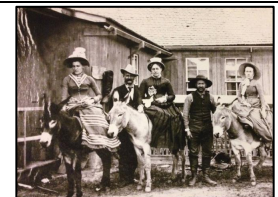
Settlers raised cattle and hogs, and took them to market on the Chisholm Trail.



Social – Family life, customs, class & caste, roles, decision making, education, leisure activities

The custom was to ride horseback to visit neighbors across the prairies; the long rides trained women to horsemanship and effected robust physical health.

In school, students learned to read, write, spell, and add; rarely did they study geography.



Belief – Religion, myths, rituals

Card playing was not regarded as specifically immoral by a large number of the masculine gender.

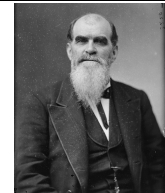
Baptist and Methodist religious revivals, “camp meetings” were held in the late 1800s.



Political – Leadership, decision making, citizenship, institutions

General Philip Sheridan was Commander in Texas under military rule after the war.

In 1874, Richard Coke was elected governor and restored their old rights and liberties (Confederate point of view).



Aesthetic – Art, music, dance, literature, leisure activities

Crazy quilts made at quilting bees elevated needlework as art to be valued.

The old-style square dances were in vogue.



Research Plan

Where do you get the information? Here's a smattering of resource ideas:

- Research traditional genealogy to learn the basic time and place
- Use family lore to find an interesting story snip to explore
- Find books and websites about the time and your ancestors' home area
- Describe the place (include maps and images of the land in the area)
- Use local histories like mug books* and county and city websites
- Find what happened on that date, or in that season or year
<https://www.onthistoday.com>
- Find weather [tps://www.history.com/search](https://www.history.com/search)
- Try Wikipedia and Google *for your time period*
 - *Design and art: Clothing fashion, home architecture
 - *Nearby attractions (parks, museums, landmarks)
 - *Famous people and battles (did they affect your family?)
 - *Nearby schools and churches
 - *Transportation (and other topics from the World Cultures Model)
- Use FamilySearch Wiki and Cyndi's List for resources for the topic and time period

*** Mug Books:** Local county histories written in the late 1880s/early 1900s. There may be a biography about a family member, full of high praise for him/her, usually added by paid subscription (take this part with a grain of salt). There may be nothing about your family, but at least half the pages of many mug books tell the history of the county and they were *part* of that history. Use this to learn about the World Cultures Model topics in that time and help create a well-rounded picture of their life.