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**Month 8 Lesson 2**

**What are Cultural Subjects?**

These are areas of study that enrich a child’s understanding of his environment. We all know that a child actively spends the first period of life learning and absorbing information about the world in which he lives. Cultural subjects are those study areas, about life around us, which helps to foster deeper understanding of the environment.

Maria Montessori believed that there were 14 tendencies peculiar to all mankind found in every culture and these were what made mankind uniquely different from all other animals.

Human beings have a deep need to adapt not only to their environment, but also to their differing cultures. The 14 tendencies are the key factors that help man adapt to his culture.

The 14 tendencies include: Exploration, orientation, order, gregariousness, Communication, abstraction, curiosity, calculation, work, repetition, concentration, self-control, perfection of creativity and independence.

The child in the same way uses these tendencies to adapt to his culture by exploring and classifying things in the environment, such as animals, plants, landforms, objects in the kitchen, the bedroom, etc. The child tends to want to have things in order around him and also in his mind. This is why the Natural Science subjects are very paramount in the 3 to 6 Montessori Cultural Subjects curriculum. These include Biology, Zoology and Geography.

From ordering things in the environment the next step is to want to share experiences and communicate these with others, this makes Language Development very important, it is a core subject in the curriculum and also is a core objective in many of the activities undertaken both in the Cultural Subjects as well as Practical life and Sensorial Education.

The child will soon move on to wanting to understand the environment, his curiosity will lead him along the path of scientific discovery, and he will therefore make generalizations from things he sees around him. He is moving gradually from the concrete to the abstract.

The child will then be led into either modifying things technically to make them better, creating artistic impressions as an artist, writer or musician or assessing the progress of man-kind as a historian.

Really it is very apparent that through the study of Cultural Subjects one is providing each Montessori child an aid to life!

**How do children arrive at and understand scientific concepts?**

To start with children are inquisitive and curious about understanding things around them. This quality is what engages the child, in the Montessori setting we encourage children to explore their environment and world through the senses.

The materials used in cultural subjects just as in other areas of the Montessori curriculum are auto-educative. They range from cards used to teach parts and classifications in geography, botany and zoology to globes for geography, and landform trays. The teacher should continue to explore, learn and make new materials as she follows the child’s interests.

The Montessori child works with the didactic materials to arrive at definitions which becomes internalized knowledge soon after. The beauty of this method of teaching is that the child no longer has to learn by rote but through the different presentations, and exercises the child gets to form scientific concepts.

Therefore the route to forming scientific concepts for the child involves four stages:

* Repetition
* Getting to know how
* Generalization
* Explanation

Cultural subjects are so important as they are the foundation for the child to understand and respect the world; it’s vastness and differences.

Cultural subjects are referred to as the “corner stone of world peace.” The hope is that a child who understands and loves the world will not become a hindrance to world peace as an adult.

**Geography**

**An Introduction**

Geography is the study about people and places in our world, and about how the Earth has and is still changing today.

The study of Geography helps us understand our relationship with the Earth and ourselves. Since the world is made up of many different people and not just ourselves alone, a study of people and places helps us learn about our global neighbours, raises our awareness of the world, so that we can learn to trust and live in peace with each other.

What we do with the earth makes a difference and will affect future generations. Therefore the study of Geography is so essential for today’s child, as it helps to foster the right awareness to make us good stewards of the Earth.

**The Earth**

The Earth is where we live, some facts about the earth.

It is made up of 71% water and 29% land, its diameter is 7,926.41 miles, and the circumference at the equator is 24,901.55 miles.

There are 7 continents:

North America

South America

Europe

Asia

Africa

Australia

Antarctica

There are 4 main water masses that divide the continents

Pacific Ocean

Atlantic Ocean

Arctic Ocean

Indian Ocean

**The Geography Tray**

**Materials:**

A tray containing:

* A map
* A small container of dirt and
* A Label (see Preparation below)

**Objectives:**

* To introduce Geography as the study of people and places in the world
* And to show how the Earth has and is still changing today.

**Preparation:**

1. Use a Permanent Pen and write “Geography” on the label, then with masking tape stick the label at the bottom of the trays top surface.
2. The Geography Tray is now ready for presentation

**Presentation:**

* Invite the children to join you for a circle presentation.
* Sit down with the children with the Geography tray.
* Explain to them that you have something special you want to share with them today.
* Place the Geography tray directly in front of you
* Say, “This is the Geography tray”
* Point to the label on the tray and read “geography”
* Then say to the children, “Geography is the study about people and places in our world and about how the Earth has and is still changing today.”
* Say, “Geography” and point to the word on the tray.
* Pick up the container of dirt and say, “ This container contains dirt.”
* Hold it up so that the children can see it.
* Study the dirt for a few minutes then pass it round the circle, starting with the child on your right.
* The say again: “Geography is the study about people and places in our world and about how the Earth has and is still changing today.”
* Point to the label again and read, “Geography”
* Pick up the Map and say, “This is a Map. A Map is an important tool that those who study geography use to see big places up close.”
* Hold it up so that the children can see it.
* Study the map for a few minutes and then pass it round the circle starting with the child on your right.
* Say again, “Geography is the study of people and places in our world and about how the Earth has and is still changing today.”
* Point to the Label again and read, “Geography”
* Return the objects to the tray.
* Return the Geography tray to its place on the shelf.

**Variations and Extensions:**

Use different objects that are used to study geography.

E.g., A compass,

**Language:**

“Geography, dirt, maps” etc.

**Control of Error:**

The teacher has set up the tray correctly

**Age:**

2 ½ and up

**Sandpaper Globe**

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**Materials:**

* A small world globe with the land areas covered with sandpaper and the water surfaces painted blue.

 **Objectives:**

1. To help the child develop a concept of the shape of the earth, i.e. the impression of the roundness of the earth.
2. To identify the two elements of the earth’s surface: land and water
3. To visualize the distribution of land and water over the earth.
4. To prepare the child for the painted globe.

**Presentation**

* Invite the child to come and work with you. Bring him over to the globes and point to the sandpaper globe. Give the child the name of the material.
* Show the child how to carry the globe by using two hands around the wooden base of the globe. Have the child carry the sandpaper globe to the table and have him place it in the centre of the table.
* Then have the child sit to your left. Tell the child, “This is the Sandpaper Globe, and it represents our planet Earth. (This is what our world looks like from outer space.)”
* Steady the globe with one hand, feel the surface with the other and explore the globe with the full hand, moving it from the top of the globe to the bottom in a slightly outward motion, rotating the globe. Always convey a lightness of touch
* On the second rotation as you feel one of the rough parts (one of the continents). Say, “This is land”, as you feel the smooth parts say “This is water”.
* Have the child feel the globe rotating it.
* As he is feels the rough parts, tell him, “That is land.”
* Have the child feel another spot (or another continent).
* Tell him, “This is also land.”
* As he feels one of the smooth surfaces (one of the oceans). Tell the child as he is feeling, “This is water.”
* Turn the globe and have him feel another smooth surface. Tell the child “This is also water.”
* Feel another rough spot and again tell the child, “This is land.”
* Feel another smooth spot and again tell the child, “This is water.”
* Do a Three-Period lesson for “land” and “water”.

**Language**
Land and Water

**Control of Error**None

 **Age**3 1/2 – 4 years

**Continent Globe**



**Material:**

* The Continent Globe, which is the colour, coded Montessori Globe.

**Objectives**:

* To teach the names of the large landmasses and water bodies.

**Presentation**:

* Invite the children to join you and show them where the globe is kept.
* Have a child carry the globe with two hands to a table. Say, "This is the Continent Globe."
* Use one hand to support the globe and rotate it with the fingers of the other hand. Admire it visually.
* Do one full rotation and on the second rotation give the language, "continent" for the brown coloured portions and "ocean" for the blue portions.
* Then point to the brown portion and say, "This big piece of land is called a continent.” Then to the blue portion saying, “This big body of water is called an ocean."
* Invite the children to have a turn. Ask them to show you "continent" and "ocean".

Age: 3 years

**Jigsaw Puzzle Map of the World** (The Study of the Continents)



**Material**:

* Continent globe
* (Blue hollow ball with the continents drawn in black ink & cut in half)
* Tray,
* Scissors,
* Jigsaw puzzle map of the hemispheres,
* Picture folder

**Objectives**:

* To give the impression of the shapes and locations of the continents.
* To give the names of the continents and oceans.
* To introduce the culture of other lands.
* To make the transformation from the globe to the map

**Presentation**:

* Invite a group of children to join you. Ask one child to lay out a mat and another to bring the painted globe over to the mat.
* Bring over the prepared ball on a tray. State, "With a globe you can only see the side that is facing you. I'm going to show you how you can see the whole earth at one time."
* Compare the prepared ball and the globe they look alike. The ball has been previously cut in half, from pole to pole through the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, leaving the continents complete (except Antarctica) and taped together with clear tape.
* Remove the tape, placing the two halves on the mat side by side. "Now we can see both halves of the world at once." If possible, make small cuts at the edge of each half so that it can be flattened to show how maps were made.
* Now introduce of the Jigsaw Puzzle Map: Take them to the map cabinet and give them the name, "This is the map cabinet and these are the jigsaw puzzle maps".
* Show the children how to remove and carry the maps with both hands. Bring the map to the mat. "This is the jigsaw puzzle map of the world. We can see two hemispheres, two halves at once."
* Compare and connect the map and the globe using the continents. Put away the globe and the prepared ball. Say that the material is very fragile and should be handled gently.
* Point to the knob and show how to remove the inset carefully. Place the inset of a continent on the mat.
* Ask each child to remove a continent and place it on the mat. After all continents have been removed, show how to replace an inset. Be sure to position the piece above its appropriate place and check visually. Replace it gently.
* Invite the children to replace the remaining continents. Remember to use the terminology "continent" frequently.
* Have the children put away the materials when they are finished.

Exercise 1: The children may build the world on the mat. Teach the children the Montessori Continent Song

North America, South America

Europe, Asia, Africa,

Don’t forget Australia

Don’t forget Antarctica

These are the continents

These are the continents

Name them if you can.

Exercise 2: Introduce the names of the continents. Remove three continents of contrasting colour and shape, include child's own continent. Give a three-period lesson. On following days, continue until the name of each continent is known. Remember to review previously learned names. Introduce the names of the oceans in the same manner.

Exercise 3: Invite a group of children who know the names of the continents to join you. Ask a child to lay out a mat, another to get the jigsaw puzzle map of the hemispheres, and you get Picture Folder 1. Ask one child to remove and name their favourite continent.

Isolate the continent on the mat. Tell the children you have some pictures of this continent. Remove the matching folder note the colour coding. Take out one picture to which the children will relate. Discuss the picture with the children.

Encourage them to share what they see with you. Place the picture beside the continent. Repeat for five or six pictures. When finished show how carefully the pictures are put into the folder. Replace the continent in the map. Either repeat the procedure for another continent then or repeat on another day.

Exercise 4: After the children have experienced the pictures for all the continents, have two children remove two continents.

Have another child remove the corresponding folders and mix up the pictures. The children would look through the pictures and decide to which continent they belong.

To check if they are correct, the name of each continent is on the back of the picture. When finished, replace the pictures in their appropriate folders and return the material.



Exercise 5: Show how to trace around the puzzle insets to make a map, colour in the map. An alternative to colouring is to use coloured paper or fabrics.

Exercise 6: When the child is reading, introduce the printed labels. The child may also label his own map.

Age: 3+ years