
Appalachian Englishes in the Twenty-First Century

Educational Materials

Chapter 7

Language and Ethnicity in Appalachia **Becky Childs**

Exercise 1:

Take a moment to read the NPR piece "[Stereotypes of Appalachia Obscure a Diverse Picture](#)". In this article, the author discusses the portmanteau "Affrilachia" and the petition to the Library of Congress to change the definition of "Appalachian" as a subject heading.

After reading this piece consider the following:

- What is the significance in the naming practices of groups and changes in the definitions of names of groups?
- In what ways are these naming practices helping to expand as well as explain understandings of what the ethnic landscape of Appalachia is both in the present and past?

Exercise 2:

While ethnic diversity has been a long-standing part of Appalachia, representations (pictures, music, films) of the diversity of Appalachian residents have been less common. Take some time to uncover historical artifacts (via web search) and construct a "story" of the historical diversity of Appalachia through the artifacts that you have found. For example, here is the link to the [Black in Appalachia's](#) digital [Community History Archive](#). With each image, sound file, or link to an article or news source, write a few sentences about the ways that this piece reflects the long-standing diversity of Appalachia.

Exercise 3:

While the history of Cherokee in Appalachia, especially in the Smoky Mountain region, is well known, contemporary Cherokee culture, including [the language](#), is much less often discussed. Do some research in order to answer the following questions about Cherokee language:

- What is the contemporary status of the Cherokee language? Consider both schooling and language education.
- Look for numbers on bilingual and monolingual language use among Cherokee residents.
- Look into language preservation and revitalization efforts and discuss the ways in which these programs are working and where they may be encountering difficulty in maintaining the Cherokee language.

Exercise 4:

Take some time to look at the journal [Pluck](#), a journal of Appalachian arts and culture. This biannual journal also has a blog that contains some examples of their work

(<https://pluckjournal.wordpress.com>). Choose two pieces from *Pluck* and consider the following questions:

- In what ways does each piece represent identity? How is the author representing notions of ethnicity and place?
- Looking at the language that the author uses in their writing, what specific words or phrases can you point to that create the representations that you noted in the first question?
- Can you find any differences in language or literary representations in works that talk about or reference the past versus those that represent contemporary society?

Exercise 5:

As noted in the chapter, the Latinx community is rapidly growing in Appalachia. Looking at the following resources — [Meghan King's Hispanic Appalachia photography portfolio](#) and the [Lua Project's music resources](#) — what are the representations of contemporary Latinx culture in Appalachia? For each of these, in what ways do you see language variation (spoken, written, or sung) and identity in day to day practices of Latinx Appalachians?