MATERIAL WORLD:
A GLOBAL FAMILY PORTRAIT

In the early 1990s, after hearing a story about Madonna's "Material Girl" promotion, photojournalist Peter Menzel decided that the world needed a reality check. After traveling the world for nearly a quarter century taking photographs and writing articles of dramatic events for newspapers and magazines, Menzel wanted to bring to light the everyday lives of average people around the world. What better way to contrast the materialistic fantasy of American pop-culture than to find statistically average families, and show what real life is like through their material possessions? The result of Menzel's project is *Material World: A Global Family Portrait* that shows 30 families around the world in front of their dwellings with all (or nearly all) of their possessions. Demographers at the United Nations and World Bank helped determine the criteria for average families according to location (urban, rural, suburban, small town, or village), type of dwelling, family size, annual income, occupation, and religion. In this activity you will explore the material world by examining eight different locations or topics. Our hope is that as you travel the material world in this activity, you will experience new thoughts, ask new questions and make new inference about what everyday life is like for our neighbors around the world.

Directions: As you complete this activity, you will be using three critical thinking skills: *making observations, drawing inferences* and *asking questions*. As you examine each location and topic, write down your observations, inferences and questions in the space provided on your packet. Then answer the questions posed in the packet. Some of the information is personal, but you can be assured that the information will not be collected by the school nor will the school or any other organization use the data provided. The questions are simply for comparative purposes with the families in the activity.

Observations and Inferences: Making observations and drawing inference are related by separate skills. An inference is a logical guess based on observation. For example, I might *observe* that a family home is built off the ground. From that observation, I might *infer* that the area experiences seasonal flooding. For each location in your packet, write two observations and inferences you made about the country or family based on your observation of the picture:

Example: Observation– 12 silver bowls
              Inference–bowls used for religious purposed because they are placed near
                   statue of Buddha

Asking Questions: For each location in your packet, write two questions (complete sentence structure) that you would like to know about the family, their possession or their country. The questions cannot be yes/no questions. You will not need to answer your own questions.

Conclusion: After completing the activities/questions for each location, answer the questions at the end of the packet.