

CULTURE SHOCK

TARGET GRADE: 4 - 12

OVERVIEW:

This activity may be used to open students' eyes to cultural differences, barriers to communication between cultures, and how that might affect building relationships. It is an excellent introduction to how societies interact with each other, and the lessons learned by students on a small scale can aid in their understanding of cultural interactions in the larger world, and in historically important events.

As an enrichment activity, this lesson provides the opportunity to explore general communication barriers, tolerance and empathy as teachers help students make connections to how we relate to others on a daily basis at school, home, and in our community. Culture shock can be used as an introduction to a unit, a classroom community builder, or a starting point to a larger discussion about tolerance and acceptance.

OBJECTIVES (what students will know or be able to do):

- Practice how to interact, communicate and cooperate with other students and group members
- Create awareness and explore barriers to communication between cultures
- Identify principles of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination occurring within groups
- Engage in class discussion on concepts concerning communication, prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination.
- Develop an appreciation for individual and cultural differences.

MATERIALS: Cultural Attribute Handouts

PREP TIME: 10 minutes

ACTIVITY TIME: 45 Minutes as a stand-alone; 2 hrs as part of unit (See Evaluation and Extension sections)

NEVADA STATE STANDARDS:

***Though these standards are not addressed specifically through this exercise, Culture Shock can serve as an excellent introduction to how different societies interact. The lessons learned through this activity can aid in the understanding of cultural interactions in the larger world, and in historically important events.**

Social Studies

HI.2.4 Recognize similarities and differences of earlier generations in areas such as work, dress, manners, stories, games, and festivals.

HI.5.3 Discuss the interactions of early explorers with native cultures.

- H1. [6-8].3* Describe the interactions among Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans.
- H1. [6-8].9* Discuss the characteristics of American culture.
- H1. [6-8].14* Identify the characteristics of pre-Columbian civilizations in South America that became part of American culture.
- H1. [6-8].16* Identify the characteristics of a civilization.
- H1. [9-12].9* Explain how trade causes cultural diffusion.
- H1. [9-12].10* Compare and contrast the characteristics of dominant world cultures.
- H2. [6-8].3* Describe how compromise and conflict among peoples contributed to political, economic, and cultural divisions.
- H2. [9-12].3* Analyze how different cultures, points of view, and self-interests influence compromise and conflict over territories, borders, and resources.
- H2. [9-12].24* Discuss examples of contemporary ethnic conflicts and explain how those conflicts have changed nations.
- H2. [9-12].25* Discuss major reasons for tensions and conflicts in the contemporary world and efforts that have been made to address them.
- H3.4.2* Recognize that communities include people who have diverse ethnic origins, customs, and traditions, and who make contributions to Nevada.
- H3.5.2* Recognize that communities include people who have diverse ethnic origins, customs, and Traditions, and who make contributions to the United States.
- H3. [9-12].21* Analyze the causes, consequences, and moral implications of ethnic conflicts around the world.
- H4. [9-12].8* Explore the influence of popular U.S. culture on the culture of other nations and vice versa.
- H4. [9-12].9* Evaluate the influence of U.S. cultural ideas on other nations.
- H4. [9-12].10* Explore the influence of various world cultures on the United States.
- H4.4.1* Describe the economic and cultural influence other nations have on the state of Nevada.
- H4.5.1* Discuss the economic, political and cultural relationships the United States has with other countries.

KEY VOCABULARY:

- **Culture** – the beliefs, customs, practices, and social behavior of a particular nation or people.
- **Stereotype** – to categorize individuals or groups according to an oversimplified standardized image or idea.
- **Prejudice** – A preformed opinion, usually an unfavorable one, based on insufficient knowledge, irrational feelings, or inaccurate stereotypes.
- **Assimilate** – to integrate somebody into a larger group, so that differences are minimized or eliminated.

LEAD INFORMATION:

Prior to the activity, the teacher will want to frame this activity as one that will allow students to explore differences among individuals and/or cultures, how we might react to those differences, and the challenges that differences may create as we attempt to communicate and interact with others. This may be addressed from a historical and cultural perspective or as a modern day perspective in terms of how we relate to each other in our day to day lives. A caution for teachers: Some students may become overly frustrated with the challenges of attempting to communicate with a group that is resistant. The activity may be paused at any point to use the teachable moment to deal with frustrations and emotion. Generally, even though some frustration is a goal, students enjoy problem-solving through the challenges.

ACTIVITY:

1. Divide the class into two groups. Each group will represent a culture. Have each culture decide upon a name for their group.
2. Give each group a list of cultural attributes; see additional attachment for Attribute Handouts. Explain that these attributes are strict rules for their society. Tell each group that they must always display their cultural attributes while communicating with each other throughout this activity. Provide the two groups with an opportunity to practice communicating while using their cultural attributes (5 min). If the entire list of attributes is too long, or difficult, for a younger group then less attributes can be assigned. Ensure that both groups of students fully understand their culture before moving to Round 1.
3. ROUND 1: *Explorers* from each group are sent to the opposite group to observe the other culture from the outside without attempting to interact (3-10 minutes depending upon the context of usage for the activity). Explorers will then return to their own group and report on the cultural attributes they observed the other group displaying. **AT NO TIME DO EXPLORERS ATTEMPT TO INTERACT, THEY ONLY OBSERVE FROM THE OUTSIDE.**
4. ROUND 2: *Scientists* are sent to study the other group's culture, and make an attempt to interact with them. Scientists may **ONLY** use the cultural attributes of their own group in their attempts at communication, i.e. those they have been assigned (3-10 minutes depending upon the context of usage for the activity). Scientists then return to their own group and report on the cultural attributes they observed and learned. **SCIENTISTS INTERACT USING ONLY THE ATTRIBUTES OF THEIR OWN CULTURE, BUT CAN TEST IDEAS OF THE EXPLORERS IN ORDER TO COMMUNICATE PREDICTIONS FOR ANTHROPOLOGISTS TO TEST.**
5. ROUND 3: Finally, *Anthropologists* are sent to visit the other culture (3-10 minutes depending upon the context of usage for the activity) to try to interact with them using any means necessary to open communication lines with the other group. Including, using cultural attributes that were learned through the previous expeditions. Anthropologists then return to their own group and report on what they learned about the cultural attributes of the other group. **ANTHROPOLOGISTS INTERACT USING ANY MEANS THEY CHOOSE.**
*** The number of Explorers, Scientists, and Anthropologists can be varied depending upon the size of the group.**
6. **Throughout all three rounds each group takes their communication rules/cultural attributes very seriously and while being visited acts out ONLY the attributes of their own culture.**
7. Instructors should observe and make a mental note or record student comments during the activity (students can be assigned this task as well) and utilize the observations during the discussion period.
8. At the end of the game, bring both groups back together. Have each culture try to guess the other group's cultural attributes. Open up discussion with the class on what they learned about the other group's culture through their interactions and reporting. Use Review Questions below to assist in facilitating this discussion.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. How did explorers feel? How did scientists feel? How did Anthropologists feel? What was difficult about each role?
2. For those who did not have a specific role, how did you feel?
3. Did anyone think the attributes of the other culture were absurd? Annoying? Did anyone report back to their group that the other culture was “difficult?”
4. At work, school, or home, why might it be important to know how another person communicates? Consider how can you best select communication strategies to use with them?
5. Did any of you feel you wanted to join the other culture? Why? What makes us decide where we belong?
6. Were there some prejudices, or stereotypes, created about the other group? What were these? Is that fair?
7. Was anyone discriminated against within their own culture? How did this make you feel about being a member of your group?
8. Have any of you ever felt like there is someone “too good” to have a conversation with you? Why do you think that was?
9. Are our cultural attributes really rules? What are some attributes of our culture here in the United States? What are some differences in attributes in other cultures in the world?

EVALUATION:

- Have the students construct an “exit ticket” which they must turn in to the instructor at the end of the lesson, writing 3 things they learned about prejudice, stereotypes, and/or communication by participating in the Culture Shock activity.
- Have students break into groups and create a new set of attributes. Challenge them to be even more subtle about their societies’ characteristics. Go through the activity again.
- Have each group come up with a set of suggestions that their class can incorporate into their everyday lives that will help them avoid stereotyping, prejudicial behavior, and will help them communicate better with each other in the future. For example students could say, “We will remember that when someone acts differently than us to be patient and learn more about that person before we make judgments or act negatively toward them.”

CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE:

- After completing the Culture Shock activity, consider how our own behaviors are influenced by the cultural attributes of our own society. Explain whether you think these are positive or negative influences and why.

CROSS-CURRICULAR EXTENSION:

- Create a public service announcement (PSA) for their school on why it is important to not stereotype people or discriminate against them, and what students can do to help students at their school be more tolerant. This can take the form of a written brochure, informative poster, skit, or even a video.
- Students can research the cultural aspects of a culture not their own. What are some of the attributes of that culture? How would one communicate with that culture? What are some behaviors that you do as a normal part of your own culture that would be offensive to that other culture?

GIFTED AND TALENTED:

- Study an influential figure that was successful at crossing cultural boundaries, or bridging gaps between cultures. How did that person achieve those things? What are some of the behaviors that person displayed that made doing so possible? Write a research paper about your findings, and present them to your class, with the ultimate goal of teaching your classmates how to cross cultural boundaries and/or bridge cultural gaps.
- Study the ways in which cultural attributes have changed in your community throughout the last century. If you met someone from 1900 that lived in your community and was the same age, would you be able to communicate with them? Why, or why not? Write an essay on what it would be like to travel back in time to your community and spend a day as a typical teenager did in 1900. Write an essay on what would happen if a teenager traveled into the future and spent a day at your school.

DIFFERENTIATION:

- Students can work in groups of their own choosing, and create their own attributes (fewer if necessary) therefore making students more comfortable with displaying their culture's attributes.
- Not every student in the class has to participate in the groups cultural attributes. Small groups may be assigned these roles with the majority of the class serving as quiet, outside observers. This group of observers might document their observations as a group and attempt to identify the cultural attributes assigned, reactions of the participants and strategies used to attempt to interact. Extra teacher facilitation and debriefing might accompany this discussion.

RESOURCES:

- www.tolerance.org
- <http://www.doe.nv.gov/Standards/SocialStudies/CompleteStandardsDec2008.pdf>

See websites below for specific tolerance related curriculum and information:

- <http://www.pbs.org/teachers/>
- <http://www.museumoftolerance.com/site/c.tmL6KfNVLtH/b.4866089/k.E83B/Education.htm>