

## Features of Culture

Grade Level: All

Time: 1-2 hours

### Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain some of the features of their own culture.
- Students will be able to describe their impressions of how the culture of the United States has shaped them.

**Curricular Connections:** Social Studies, History, Language Arts

### Materials:

My Culture worksheet ([www.publicachievement.org/TeacherGuide/Activities/MyCulture.pdf](http://www.publicachievement.org/TeacherGuide/Activities/MyCulture.pdf)).

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/wvs/guides/insights/culture/module1/lesson2/wksheet2.html>

### Procedure:

- 1) Write the following statements on the board:
  - a. No one is exactly like me.
  - b. I have many things in common with the members of my family and community.
  - c. Every person in the world needs some of the same things I need.
- 2) Point out to students that people in various groups often look at people in other groups as “different.” Ask students: How does this occur in our school or community? Why?
- 3) Ask students to describe some of these differences. Then ask: Why might people in one group behave differently from people in another group?
- 4) Explain that many differences are related to culture—beliefs and ways of living that are handed down from one generation to the next.
- 5) Working from the statements on the board, explain that all people share basic needs (food, shelter, love, respect, etc.). In addition, each of us learns a set of behaviors and beliefs from the people we grow up with (the foods we eat, the way we celebrate holidays, how we are expected to behave toward neighbors, etc.). Finally, each individual has unique talents and preferences (I’m good at math; I’m good at soccer; I don’t like chocolate, etc.).
- 6) Explain that when we talk about behaviors and beliefs that a group of people have in common, (not individual talents and preferences) we are talking about culture.
- 7) Explain to students that they will now look at some of the features of culture. Provide each student with a copy of the worksheet. Make sure students understand each feature by providing or eliciting examples. Students complete the worksheet individually or by interviewing one another.
- 8) Take four of the features of culture (celebrations, greeting people, beliefs about hospitality, attitudes toward the importance of personal space and privacy) and ask students to respond in their journals to the following questions about these features:
  - a. What kinds of celebrations are important in your family? In the U.S.?
  - b. How do we generally greet people we don’t know? People we do know?

- c. How do we show hospitality in our community?
  - d. How important do you feel it is to have personal space and privacy?
- 9) Ask students to compare their answers in groups of four. Ask students to add to their lists the responses of their group members that are different from their own.
- 10) Conduct a whole-class discussion:
- a. What did you learn from this activity?
  - b. What conclusions can you begin to draw about the culture of the U.S.?
  - c. What are your beginning impressions about how U.S. culture has shaped you?

**Reflection:**

- Discussion of culture and how it affects how we think of ourselves and others.
- The learner will use primary sources to gather information for research topics.

**Assessment:**

1. Interpretation of Primary Source Materials
2. Journal Entries