

Culture: Participants discuss the role that cultural traditions and practices play in our lives; promote acceptance and inclusion of differences and commonalities amongst cultures.

Lesson plans:

- 1) Culture is Everywhere
- 2) Culture Day

Lesson: Culture is Everywhere

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS: What is culture? What does culture look like? What is the purpose of culture?

OBJECTIVES/PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS: Participants define culture; participants find evidence of culture in their lives and all around; participants make an art project depicting culture in their lives.

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE: Culture is a shared set of practices and traditions that characterize a society or group of people. Culture can include clothing, food, traditions, ceremonies, spiritual practices and beliefs, language, family structure, and communication styles. Culture is often, though not necessarily, correlated with ethnicity and racial identity. Culture plays a large role in individual identities. Helping young people recognize cultural influences all around them helps them understand themselves.

MATERIALS:

- Pens and pencils
- Paper
- String
- Hole punch
- Index cards or small squares of paper
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils

LENGTH OF LESSON: 45 minutes to 1 hour

PROCEDURE:

1. Begin by explaining culture is a shared set of practices and traditions that characterize a society or group of people. Culture can include clothing, food, traditions, rituals, ceremonies, spiritual practices and beliefs, language, family structure, and communication styles. Explain that culture influences who we are, just like our parents and personalities.
2. Have participants brainstorm a few examples of culture (ex: speaking English, speaking **Spanish, wearing a blue and white school uniform, saying “please” and “thank you,” giving your teacher a hug at the end of the day, wearing your hair in braids, using American money, wearing flip flop shoes**). Record their ideas on a board or large paper.
3. Explain that today they will be having a cultural scavenger hunt: they will find evidence of culture in their lives and all around. Explain that they will write their examples of culture on the

index cards or small squares of paper and draw a picture of it. They should find at least six examples of culture around them. Participants can work alone, in pairs, or in groups.

4. Pass out index cards or squares of paper, pens and pencils, crayons, markers, or colored pencils. Direct participants to get up out of their seats to search for evidence of culture all around them. Assist as necessary.

5. Have participants write their examples of culture on the index cards or small squares of paper and draw a picture of each example. An example of six cards: 1) “speaking English” with a picture of the A, B, C’s, 2) “using American money” with a picture of a dollar bill, 3) “going to church on Sunday” with a picture of a cross, 4) “watching cartoons on Saturday morning” with a picture of a TV or a cartoon character, 5) “bringing lunch in a brown paper bag” with a picture of a brown paper bag or lunch foods, 6) “wearing friendship bracelets” with a picture of a friendship bracelet.

6. When participants have finished at least six cards, punch two holes on the top of each card and string them together.

7. Have participants share what they found on their scavenger hunts. Ask participants to discuss what each example of culture means and the role it plays in their lives.

8. Hang cultural scavenger hunt art projects throughout the room.

JOURNAL PROMPT: If you were to invent a cultural tradition or ritual, what would it be? A language? A food? A dance? Describe your new tradition and why you would have people practice it.

EVALUATION: Did participants define culture? Were participants able to identify evidence of culture around them? Did participants create a collage of culture?

RELATED ACTIVITIES: Ask participants to find examples of diverse cultural traditions in their community, or even within their families, and report back to the group.

Lesson: Culture Day

ESSENTIAL QUESTION: What are your cultural traditions?

OBJECTIVES/PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS: Participants bring food, dances, songs and music, clothing, ceremonies, games, and traditions from their own cultures or a culture of their choosing to share; participants gain exposure to cultural traditions different from their own.

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE: Culture is a shared set of practices and traditions that characterize a society or group of people. Culture can include clothing, food, traditions, rituals, ceremonies, spiritual practices and beliefs, language, family structure, and communication styles. Celebrating a diversity of cultural traditions promotes **tolerance and understanding**. **Plus, it’s fun to learn about other traditions.**

MATERIALS:

- Culture Day information sheet for parents/guardians

- Tables
- Plates, utensils, and napkins
- Stereo
- World map

LENGTH OF LESSON: 2 sessions, 1 to 2 hours

PROCEDURE:

Day 1

1. At least a week prior to Culture Day, introduce the concept of Culture Day to participants. Explain that each participant will have a chance to share special foods, dances, songs and music, ceremonies, games, clothing, and traditions from their own cultures or a culture of their choosing.
2. Define culture. Explain that culture is a shared set of practices and traditions that characterize a society or group of people. Culture can include clothing, food, traditions, rituals, ceremonies, spiritual practices and beliefs, language, and communication styles.
3. Give examples of cultural traditions with which participants may be familiar: fireworks on the 4th of July, **cards and flowers for loved ones on Valentine's day**, a cake with candles on your birthday, and eating certain foods at Thanksgiving. Give other examples from around the world.
4. Ask participants to brainstorm food, dances, songs and music, ceremonies, games, and traditions from their own cultures or a culture of their choosing. Explain that they will each have about 5 minutes to present their cultural tradition to the group. For each presentation, the participant should be able to answer: What did you bring? What culture is it representing? What does this cultural tradition mean to you? Assist with research as necessary. Participants might bring in a traditional dress worn at a Korean wedding, a special dish cooked for a Mexican quinceañera, demonstrate a traditional African dance style, or read a Jewish poem in Hebrew.
5. Send participants home with a Culture Day information sheet for parents/guardians, explaining Culture Day and asking them to help their child prepare if necessary. Remind participants to bring their cultural representation to the next session.

Day 2

1. Set up the space for presentation of various cultural representations. Set up a table at the front of the space. Set up stereo and stage area as necessary depending on what participants are sharing. Post the map where it is visible.
2. Call participants one at a time to present their cultural tradition to the group. Remind the group to be supportive of each other! For each presentation, the participant should be able to answer: What did you bring? What culture is it representing? What does this cultural tradition mean to you? Direct participants to locate where their cultural tradition is from and place a marker on the map for each region or area represented. After the participant presents, allow others to ask questions of the presenter.
3. If participant has brought food to share, serve the food after their presentation.

4. After all participants have presented, invite participants to mingle and teach each other their cultural traditions.
5. Clean up and have participants respond to journal prompt.

JOURNAL PROMPT: What is a new cultural tradition you learned about today?

EVALUATION: Did participants bring in a cultural representation? Did participants share the meaning of what they brought? Did participants engage with each other regarding their cultural traditions?

RELATED ACTIVITIES: Have participants research the origins of a cultural tradition. Invite a dance group or a music group to do a traditional performance at Girls Only. Arrange a field trip to a local restaurant featuring food from another country or culture. Arrange a field trip to cultural enclaves such as Chinatown, Koreatown, or Little Italy. Arrange a field trip to a music, dance, or theater performance. Arrange a field trip to a museum.