

The Alphabet of Culture

Instructor: Julie Black

Workshop: The Cross Cultural Classroom/ International Foods

Targeted Grade Level(s): 6-8th grade *(Can be tailored for younger or older students by adjusting the expectations)*

Content Area(s) Covered: Social Studies

Students will build an understanding of the relationship of cultural components by creating their own culture using the existing culture as a model. The project can be split into two separate lesson plans – Researching the existing culture and creating a culture as two plans. International Foods are examined as a culture lunch at the end of the project.

Anticipated Duration: 1 month *(This can be shortened by changing parameters of the project.)*

Rationale: To help students ask and answer the questions: *What is culture? Why are there different cultures? How are other cultures different and similar to my own culture?*

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to discuss and reference components of culture by being introduced to the vocabulary of culture.
2. Students will research a global culture following teacher-created guidelines and break the culture into small sections. The students will then link the sections and find the influences that each component of culture has on another component. For example the relationship between religion and government, geography and language, or historical events and holidays.
3. Students will create their own culture using the same guidelines and demonstrate the influence and relationship between culture components.
4. Students will prepare an oral presentation with a visual aide depicting each cultural component described.
5. Each Student will prepare a dish to share with the class either from the culture they researched or the culture they create for the culture lunch at the end of the project.

Sunshine State Standards:

SS.A.2.3.1: *The student understands how language, ideas, and institutions of one culture can influence other (e.g., through trade, exploration, and immigration).*

SS.A.2.3.4: *The student understands the impact of geographical factors on the historical development of civilizations.*

SS.A.2.3.6: *The student knows the major events that shaped the development of various cultures (e.g., the spread of agrarian societies, population movements, technological and cultural innovation, and the emergence of new population centers).*

SS.A.3.3.1: *The student understands ways in which cultural characteristics have been transmitted from one society to another (e.g., through art, architecture, language, other artifacts, traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviors).*

SS.A.3.3.2: *The student understands the historical events that have shaped the development of cultures throughout the world.*

SS.B.1.3.3: *The student knows the social, political, and economic divisions on Earth's surface.*

SS.B.1.3.4: *The student understands ways factors such as culture and technology influence the perception of places and regions.*

SS.B.2.3.1: *The student understands the patterns and processes of migration and diffusion throughout the world.*

SS.B.2.3.3: *The student understands ways cultures differ in their use of similar environments and resources.*

Resources/Materials Needed:

1. Paper
2. Pen or pencils
3. Access to Internet and Library for Research
4. Materials for visual aides (Power Point, CDR)
5. Poster
6. Poster Board
7. Markers
8. Pictures from magazines, hand drawn, or printed from Internet
9. Glue

Procedures:

1. Introduce the components of culture using the Iceberg model.
2. Students will be split into groups and introduced to the alphabet of culture. Students are given a Vocabulary list in conjunction with the culture alphabet.
 - a. Alphabet of Culture: Culture Traits broken into the alphabet.

A= Appearance	F= Food	L = Leaders & government
B= Belief Systems	G= Geography	Etc...
C= Communication (language)	H = Housing	
D= Dates both historical and holiday	J = Jobs	
E = Entertainment & Art	K= Knowledge/Education	

It is not necessary to go to Z and the length of the project can be changed by lengthening or shortening the list of traits researched. I also make a list of questions to be answered for each culture trait. Questions for appearance encourage students to research traits specific to the culture. Students are not allowed to report only that people in India wear jeans & t-shirts. They are required to research culturally significant appearance traits. For example, women in Peru wear one pony tail when they are single and two when they are married.

- b. The Vocabulary required is a short list of words to help the student describe the components of culture. *Culture, Culture Trait, Culture Region, Acculturation, Diffusion, Ethnicity, Urban, Rural, Tradition, Industry, Economy, Tolerance, Government, Monarchy, Communism, Fundamentalism, Democracy.*

3. Each group member is assigned to research three or four culture traits of an existing culture assigned to the group and create the culture traits for the made up culture. The number of letters used in the project is determined by the number of students in the class. Each group member should have an equal number of traits to research. Students are required to turn in a bibliography of books, articles, and internet sources used in the research.
4. Groups prepare an oral presentation to the class describing the findings of their research and their created culture. Each member is required to present individual findings and prepare a visual aide to support the presentation. Visual aides must only have visual representations and they are not allowed to have more than a caption of text. Visual aides can be Power Point presentations or a collage poster with visual representations of the culture traits.
5. At the end of the project students participate in a celebration by having a culture lunch. Each member is required to bring a dish to share with the class from either the culture they researched or the culture they created. Students will also submit a recipe card with their dish. The recipes are copied and compiled into a cookbook for the students as a final gift for the project.

Informal/Formal Assessments:

Assess the students at intervals throughout the project

- Research Assessment: Students are required to look at ten different sources while researching for the project. Final requirement for the bibliography is four different sources. A worksheet is provided for them to use to fill out necessary information during their research. The worksheet is evaluated and the sources are assessed.
- Quiz on the vocabulary of culture traits. Students are required to define the traits on a study guide and use the guide to prepare for the quiz.
- Bibliography is due prior to presentation. The bibliography must be typed and in MLA format. (We discuss and practice this earlier in the year)
- Presentations are graded on both content and presentation skills. Students are graded individually on the research and presentation of the culture traits assigned. A component of their grade is based on participation with their group and in class. Students are allowed to use note cards during presentations, but are not allowed to look at their posters or power point projects.
 - Content evaluation is based on the depth of understanding the student provides. Students are required to put all content information into their own words and to choose accessible information.
 - Created cultures are assessed by the logic they present. Each culture trait must be related to another culture trait in the project. Students must work together to ensure all culture traits are interdependent in some way.
- Recipes must be typed and turned in on the day of the lunch.

Evaluation/Reflection:

The project is a favorite for 6th grade students. It is ambitious and demanding for them. The project could be split into three lesson plans and perhaps take less time. The most difficult aspect of the project for students is the research. Students will often find sources of information that are too complicated or have questionable validity. It is very important to be checking their progress regularly and helping them to take complicated information and simplify.

As a teacher I enjoy the project, because it allows me to work with each student individually. I set up meeting dates with each group and work with that group on the research. The students are very engaged and enjoy the autonomy of the project. The created culture is lots of fun for the students and it allows them to apply what they have learned about culture.

It is important to set boundaries with the created cultures. The students will sometimes try to use favorite television characters or shows as a basis of their culture. I require them to create a culture from their own imaginations. As with all group work, conflicts arise. Grading students individually helps alleviate some of the stress, but I encourage the students to welcome the conflicts. I reassure them they do not lose points for disagreeing, but they will lose points for inappropriate actions during the disagreement. I am the mediator and we try to work out all the problems as a group. It also gives us an opportunity to discuss conflict resolution skills.

The culture lunch is a little stressful and it is helpful to ask parents to come and participate in the event. Students should sign up for the dishes they will bring – that way the lunch does not just consist of desserts from every culture studied.