

# IDEAS 75

**International Online Teachers Society  
Debate  
Educational Materials For  
Advance and Upper Intermediate  
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society  
Publishing Committee**



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## CULTURE 101

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Culture is the element that binds a particular group together. It forms the fusing component that distinguishes one unit from another. Inherently, every race, nation, minority or majority, has its own culture. It is the one thing that remains constant in one group, yet maintains a dynamism that makes the group unique.

We learn culture from many sources. As we grow up, we get exposed to the culture that our very own parents were exposed to. Our culture was handed down to us from our earliest ancestors and it is upon us to communicate whatever culture we have learned down through the generations. It is not upon us to question nor challenge culture. Culture simply is what it is and we can not dare have it any other way. We can not ask why something is so because the answer is always: BECAUSE IT SIMPLY IS.

However, modern thinking has caused us to break free from the bonds created by culture.

I remember the time when women couldn't leave the house in really skimpy shorts or see-through blouses. Everyone would frown upon such women, who get undesirable labels like slut, flirt or worse, call girls. Nowadays, we see women flaunting their figures and their legs in really short shorts. Well, maybe "flaunting" has simply lost its meaning in this case because nowadays, wearing shorts is a normal thing when a girl or woman wants to be dressed comfortably while outdoors. So they wear shorts of various lengths, depending now on self-confidence rather than on attaining a specific level of decency. One can not be labeled a provocative individual just because she wears shorts outside the home. Everybody does it already. Well, almost everybody.

Back then, boys and girls couldn't be seen together without a chaperon. Now, group dates are fine and when those groups break up into pairs, no one really creates a stir. Kids are given more emotional freedom and independence than my generation ever was.

Talking back was heavily frowned upon by our elders. You uttered a single word of protest and you'd be accused of rebelling or being disrespectful. Nowadays, kids are given a chance to have a proactive role in the way they are raised. They can freely express themselves by reasoning with their parents or explaining their side of the story. This is of course still with boundaries, but those boundaries can sometimes get blurry to the point of nonexistence. What's emphasized now is to try to get heard without sounding overly assertive.

Culture is reactive sometimes. It is in response to a current need or requirement for knowledge or behavior towards a stimulus. We can not totally reject culture but only use it as a guide towards living a civilized life.

### QUESTIONS OR DISCUSSION:

1. Define culture. What is it essentially in your own opinion?
2. What are the factors often encompassed by culture?
3. How is culture changed? Be able to cite examples as needed.
4. In your country, what aspects of culture have been dissolved completely?
5. Why is culture necessary?



## GLOBALIZING CULTURE

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Culture begins in the mind and the soul. Then it translates into perceptible behavior which then becomes manifested in tangible objects or creations such as writings, arts, crafts, and other related things. A race establishes its identity with the culture it possesses and passes down through its generations. Culture is both constant and dynamic. It is both static and variable according to the present generation that it is handed down to. It is both conventional and unorthodox, depending on its handlers.

Culture, as they say, defines a people. It gives a race something perceptible for others in order to gain recognition for that race.

Since time immemorial, culture has helped establish racial identities in more ways than one.

For instance, where one race is known for being deeply honorable in all aspects, another race may be known for being hard workers and fun-loving people. Where one race is recognized for their frugality and business acumen, another is known for their sought-after buying power and global influence. Where one nation is known for their citizens' laidback style of living, another is known for their serious, no-nonsense approach to living life. Indeed, depending on which race one belongs to, there will always be certain tags or connotations attached to their race.

It can be difficult to firmly establish whether one race is able to remain consistent with their culture. The world, after all, has gone global. Information and goods are transportable to almost anywhere on the globe, so influences can also be readily transmitted by a huge number of means.

Interracial marriages are common so that children born to such unions are a composition of not just mixed genes but also blended culture. We communicate our needs and desires aboard technological marvels. Not far behind is the communication of cultures that makes others aware of who and what we are.

Yes, culture has gone global. We now exchange cultural concepts at the touch of a button. The most watched video on YouTube has been shared by people all over the world and its influence resounds throughout various forms of media as well as spectrums. Yet it has remained solely its originator's property despite the sharing it has gone through.

When people think about cars, they have a wide range of concepts on which carmaker has the most dependable creation. However, the very first self-propelled road vehicle/military tractor that runs on steam has been attributed to the French, specifically Nicolas-Joseph Cugnot. But see how it has influenced the day-to-day living of so many people all over the world.

When we speak of culture, we think the same way. Culture is at once reactive (an active response to an active need) as well as static (an unchanging response to a constant need). People build culture and it absolutely identifies them. We create culture because we truly need something that'll tell others we are a people apart.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Which race do you believe is the most culturally diverse? Justify your answer.
2. Which race is the most culturally unchanged? Justify your answer.
3. Which racial culture do you admire the most? Why so?
4. Elaborate on the many ways by which your own race has diversified.
5. Why is it vital to stay open to cultural change?



## THE ROLE OF CULTURE TO ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL IDENTITY

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Culture defines a race. It creates the diversity that exists among different races and sometimes even within a particular race. Human beings could not have survived throughout the ages without some semblance of culture. We naturally prefer to be recognized based on our concepts, traditions, knowledge, beliefs, arts, and other elements that make up our culture. Culture establishes a race's identity.

A few years ago, there was this person who got sensational criticism for saying that my race had no identity in the world. No matter what arena there was, according to that person, no one could really find anything significant being contributed by someone from my country. That really hurt for many in my country. I believe that individual was heavily criticized by many from my country for what was deemed callous and cruel in his/her remarks. (Honestly, I don't remember the person's gender anymore.)

However, those times have slowly gone. Those times when my country couldn't even be located on a standard map by foreign people, have eventually given way to due recognition. Gradually, many citizens of my country have been able to establish an identity for my race quite distinct from that of our neighbors. True, we may still have one of the largest English-speaking populations in the planet, but many of our local song writers and artists have learned to create works maximizing our native language. Of course, those songs might have a smattering of English or some other foreign language at certain points, but those songs still carry the pride of the brown race. They speak of the angst of people in my race, how we value relationships and other such inspirations for songwriting.

My race has always been great with adapting to everything foreign. We are able to take a language, imitate its nuances then infuse it with our own brand of adapting. We embrace other cultures and readily make them part of our own, of what we are. My race is good with that and it is what makes us special and extraordinary. Maybe we are a nation of great imitators and pretenders. But that's precisely why our chameleon-like properties can not be duplicated almost anywhere.

We have our culture, yes we do. Any foreign tourist can visit our museums for a glimpse of that. The reason why our racial identity can not be so easily established is because we have been under so much tyrannical rule since the beginning of time. That has made our culture a huge mixture of other cultures. Although foreign influences have continued to be enmeshed within our culture, we still wish to be recognized by our own identity. We want people everywhere to remember us as the race that tried hard and made it, not the race that died down unto itself. We have a culture that's uniquely our own and we certainly deserve our place in the sun.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What contribution/s does culture have on national pride and identity?
2. What are the elements of culture?
3. How can national identity crisis be overcome?
4. Is it bad when racial culture is heavily influenced by foreign culture? Why or why not?
5. Are you proud of your culture? How do you show this pride?



## CULTURE - EXPRESSING ONE'S IDENTITY

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Culture can be a very complex matter but almost always it can be a starting point when we deal with expressing one's identity. Culture in its diversity has many meanings. For the anthropologists and other behavioral scientists, it can mean a full range of learned human behavior patterns. But of course for a biologist, he has a different perspective about it. For him it can be a colony of bacteria or other microorganisms that is growing in his laboratory in a Petri dish. For other people, it refers to the appreciation of music, art, good literature and food.

Culture as it is can be a powerful tool for survival and at the same time it can be a very fragile or salient phenomenon too. We can consider it as constantly changing for it can be easily lost because it exists in our human minds alone. It is not only considered as complexes of learned behavior patterns but also of perceptions too. These patterns specifically are shared by all of humanity collectively. Around the world, people have these cultural universal traits.

Some of these "human cultural traits" include communicating with a verbal language like limited sounds and the grammatical use on forming sentences; using age and gender to classify people; classifying people based on marriage, relationship and kinship; raising kids in certain family setting and having a concept of privacy. It can even deal with the distinction of good and bad behavior, making jokes and playing games, having art and having sort of leadership roles for implementing community decisions. Yes, with all these many possible universal traits, different cultures have developed and adopted their own specific ways of expressing it. Cultures are not a product of lone individuals. Consequently they are the continuous evolving product of people who interact with each other.

It will make no sense if there is no interaction of people with these cultural patterns like language and politics. Culture serves as a bond that connects the ties of the people of a region or a community together. These are the traditions and customs that these people follow. Like for instance having their festivals to celebrate or even the kind of clothes that they wear. It may also involve the food that they eat but most importantly, it refers to the cultural values that they adhere to that bind them together.

Culture is a system of social control, meaning this is where people shape their standards and behavior. It also influences one's way of living which creates an impact in the social life of a being. It is said to be the oil that keeps a society running. It is considered as the main pillars of the development and sustenance of a community. A society can't progress without it.

Therefore, the importance of culture is that, it serves as a link between people and their value systems. Culture, per se, is a collective experience of a society. It is actually the impact of our reaction and our decision-making of our every-day facts and circumstances in life. It is what makes us distinct from each other as a society, community and as individuals. Culture indeed is a way of expressing one's identity, so we must hold on to it.

Questions for discussion:

1. What is the importance of culture?
2. How does culture affect our relationship with other communities? How about with other countries?
3. Do you agree in the fact that culture is a very important tool in the development of a community? Why or why not?
4. Will a community or society exist without culture? Justify your answer.
5. Do you believe that culture is a framework for understanding communities and societies? Why or why not?



## Culture, Children and Chinese Zodiac

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Culture is the heritage of the people. It is based on language, beliefs and rituals that various races practice. It is the mark and the distinctive characteristic of each individual. Culture is based on the art, the manners, the knowledge and the achievements of each race. It makes us who we are and it has a big impact on our decisions and on our futures. Most of us have a certain religion, a type of food that we like and the way we act to people because we got those ideas from our culture. By seeing how your dad or mom acts, you also get to follow their beliefs and religion.

Each year, cultural aspects are threatened due to modernization. Most practices are no longer followed in Africa and in other countries because children today no longer accept their heritage. Some have turned away from their culture and accepted fully the culture of others. This means that their identity, lifestyle and even their behavior has been changed radically. In the future, a lot of cultural beliefs and practices will be lost and it can only be stopped if we protect our own cultural identity.

Recently, Jackie Chan released a movie called Chinese Zodiac - CZ12. The movie is about 12 zodiac animal fountain heads which is from a very old castle. The 12 animal heads represent the 12 zodiac constellational symbols. Some of the animals found in the Chinese zodiac are the ox, the lion and the snake. During the 1800s Opium war the British looted the treasures and they brought it to another place. It took over a century before the treasures were given back to the Chinese people. In the end, Jackie tried hard to get back the treasures. He was even hurt while protecting some of them.

In the story, several countries were fighting over their cultural relics. Most of those treasures were taken by other countries during wars. There are also treasures which were stolen by thieves and sold at black markets. Why do you think that their treasures and old relics are important? The answer is that the treasures and old items that a country has is its cultural background. Such treasures, such as the zodiac animal heads, were relics of the past and it contains about the rich history of the Chinese culture. Such treasures do not belong to collectors but to the people. They should be displayed in museums so that the kids will also learn about their past. That is why history, culture and the relics are important.

### Questions:

- 1) What is a black Market?
- 2) What are constellations? What are some that you know?
- 3) Who was the actor in the movie Chinese Zodiac? Why is he famous?
- 4) Why are the cultural relics important?
- 5) How can you preserve your culture?



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