

CULTURAL AWARENESS



Lesson: Cultural Awareness

This lesson looks at the meanings of cultural awareness, how to become more aware of our own and other cultures, and the benefits of gaining a deeper understanding of the differences between people.

Level: Intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level B2 and above)

Time: 60 mins

How to use this lesson:

Parts of this lesson can be done at home if time is limited (see suggestions below). If you do this, allow time in class for discussion of the different aspects of the topic.

Teacher's notes

Worksheet A

1. **At home:** Students can prepare this exercise at home, ready for discussion in class.
In class: Allow 10-15 minutes for students to read the text and answer the questions. Those who finish quickly can discuss and compare their answers with a partner.

Check answers and encourage students to justify them. Allow for a variety of different interpretations.

Answers

- 1 Students' own answers
 - 2 Suggested answer: The understanding that people think, act and believe differently.
 - 3 Suggested answer: Looking at / examining our own cultural beliefs.
 - 4 Students' own answers
 - 5 Suggested answer: Usually from our family background and where we grow up.
 - 6 Answer: superior to
 - 7 Suggested answer: An interest in literature, films, politics, history, etc.
 - 8 Suggested answer: Because we have developed and the modern world demands that we understand other cultures.
- 2 **Allow 3-4 minutes for students to read the information on their own. Then put them in pairs or small groups to discuss. Allow five minutes for discussion before eliciting their reactions.**
If necessary, prompt with further questions, such as:
 - ▶ *Do you think that cultural awareness is an important part of personal growth?*
 - ▶ *What are your own experiences of working or living alongside people from different cultures?*
 - ▶ *How can cultural awareness help us in business / foreign relations / diplomacy / etc.*

Worksheet B

- 3 **At home:** This exercise can be done at home if you prefer.
In class: Students can work in pairs for this exercise. They should be able to do it in 3-4 minutes. Give help with any other vocabulary that students don't fully understand.
Finally, ask students to say which items they have ticked. Encourage them to discuss their beliefs further.



CULTURAL AWARENESS



Lesson: Cultural Awareness

Answers

- | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|------------------|
| 1 assumptions | 3 empathy | 5 diversity | 7 challenges | 9 self-awareness |
| 2 respect | 4 impose | 6 embrace | 8 judgements | 10 exclusion |

- 4 **At home:** Students read the article and note down their answers to the questions.

In class: Give students 5-10 minutes in order to read the texts and answer the questions. You may wish to tell early finishers to compare their answers with a partner. Elicit their answers and encourage as many students as possible to tell you what they think.

The answers will be the students' own, but give guidance where necessary, especially about the 'lesson' learned by each person in the texts.

- 5 Give each pair or group 5-10 minutes to share their ideas. Then elicit responses from different pairs or groups. Conduct a class discussion based on what they know. One of the aims here is to make students realise how much they already know about cultures different to their own – which is a positive step towards being culturally aware. Encourage them to think of the advantages of finding out about different cultures in their everyday lives. Students who are passionate about food, music (lyrics in particular), films, celebrities or sport should have plenty to contribute to the discussion. In addition, encourage the use of vocabulary practised in this lesson.

Follow up, if necessary, by asking:

How else do we build up our knowledge of different cultures in our everyday lives?

Extra activity

Choose aspects of another culture and ask students to write down what they might be like. Tell them that they should shout out, or write down, the first thing that they think of in each case. You could start like this:

- ▶ *What do you think of first when I mention ...*
- ▶ *the food in Japan*
- ▶ *schools in Nepal*
- ▶ *houses in New Zealand*
- ▶ *music in Turkey*
- ▶ *etc.*

Then, after the initial responses, follow up with questions about each one, e.g.

Teacher: What do you think of first when I mention the food in Japan?

Students: 'Noodles' 'Rice' 'Spicy food' 'Sushi', etc.

Teacher: Do you think they also eat bread? / Do you think they eat [rice] for every meal? / What do you think they think we eat?



CULTURAL AWARENESS



Student's copy

Lesson: Cultural Awareness

Worksheet A

1 Read the text and answer the questions that follow.

What is cultural awareness and why is it important?

What is classed as normal behaviour in one culture can sometimes be unsuitable, unacceptable, or even offensive in another. We're all different and we all have different beliefs and ways of doing things. Understanding this is what cultural awareness is all about.

Cultural awareness can begin by holding up a mirror. We need to take a long, hard look at ourselves. What makes us the way we are? Well, there's history, religion, tradition, education, and our parents. These are all good things. But do any of them make us better than others? No. Not better, but different.

It's easy to understand why we start off believing that our culture is better than any other. In fact, some argue that it's necessary in order to survive. As children, we typically build our view of the world from our family and the place we grow up. However, as we get older our understanding of the world grows with us.

In the past, many people never left the comfort of their own town or district. They could all spend their days happily believing that the life they knew was the best, that their way of doing things was the right way, and not imagining or caring what others might think. Today's world isn't like that though. We do business with people from different cultures, we sell each other products and ideas, we live next door to each other, we listen to music from around the world and we learn different languages. We all need to learn to appreciate each other's cultures and ways of living.

Paragraph 1

- 1 Can you think of any examples of behaviour from another culture being 'unsuitable, unacceptable, or even offensive'?
- 2 In your own words, what is cultural awareness?

Paragraph 2

- 3 Why does the writer mention 'holding up a mirror'? What does he mean?
- 4 The writer mentions 'history, religion, tradition, education, and our parents'. Which of these do you think is most important in forming our cultural identity?

Paragraph 3

- 5 Where does our original view of culture come from?
- 6 Which phrase in this paragraph is a synonym of 'better than'?

Paragraph 4

- 7 This paragraph contains examples of cultural exchange. Can you think of other examples?
- 8 In your own words, why is cultural awareness important?



MACMILLAN LIFE SKILLS

Student's copy

- ## How cultural awareness develops



CULTURAL AWARENESS



Student's copy

Lesson: Cultural Awareness

Worksheet B

3 Look at the points below and match the words in bold to their meanings. Tick the points you agree with.

Living successfully with different cultures

- ☐ We need to recognise and welcome cultural **diversity**.
- ☐ Cultural awareness begins with **self-awareness**.
- ☐ We shouldn't make **assumptions** about other people.
- ☐ It's wrong to make **judgements** about people until we understand their culture.
- ☐ We need **empathy** if we are going to understand the other person.
- ☐ Never forget that people new to living in your culture face **challenges** we can only imagine.
- ☐ You don't have to agree with the views of others, but always **respect** them.
- ☐ When we learn to **embrace** the differences between us, we can work well together.
- ☐ Keeping language simple helps prevent the **exclusion** of others.
- ☐ It's a mistake to try to **impose** one culture onto another.

- 1 beliefs based on little evidence _____
- 2 treat properly _____
- 3 an understanding gained by putting ourselves in the other's position _____
- 4 force; press _____
- 5 being different _____
- 6 welcome; show warmth towards; accept enthusiastically _____
- 7 difficulties _____
- 8 opinions _____
- 9 knowledge of yourself _____
- 10 not including; leaving something or someone on the outside _____

4 Read the experiences overleaf and, for each one, say:

- ▶ what the person learned.
- ▶ whether you think it was a valuable lesson.
- ▶ whether you have heard about, or experienced, similar situations.



MAGMILLAN LIFE SKILLS



Lesson: Cultural Awareness

Things I've learned

Continuing our regular look at cultural differences, today four people tell us about the time they learned a valuable life lesson.

SAM, UK

"We grew up on a diet of American television. As a result of that, I used to think that all teenagers ever did was hang out with their friends, go for a drive in someone's car, have parties all the time, oh, and eat burgers. I thought that in the USA, the sun shone all the time, you could travel across the country in an hour or two, and if you went to New York or Chicago or Miami, you would almost certainly be killed! Now I know better."

MARIE, USA

"When I travelled abroad for the first time, I was really shocked at the way people stared at me in the street. It was really scary sometimes. One day a girl was looking at me on the train and I'd had enough of it. She was staring at me – right in the eyes. Not angrily but she wasn't smiling either. I said to her, 'What are you looking at?' She didn't look embarrassed or turn away. She just said, 'You have very beautiful eyes'. I think that was my first lesson in cultural awareness – what she was doing wasn't rude or threatening for her, but it was for me."

JAMIE, SCOTLAND

"I used to watch a comedy programme on TV. There were characters from different countries and they spoke English in a funny way. I used to laugh so much! Then I met someone from one of those countries and I showed them a video of the programme, expecting them to laugh. No reaction at first, and then an apologetic, 'I'm sorry but it doesn't make me laugh'. It was a massive lesson for me – we were just ridiculing and stereotyping foreigners for comic effect. I don't find that so funny any more."

SEAN, IRELAND

"I once got the chance to watch my favourite football team play in another country. Well, we got a great reception from the people we met. They were good-natured and friendly and made us feel at home. Of course, some of the fans were not so friendly but most people were really nice. The thing is, this came as a huge surprise to me. I don't know quite what I expected but my own prejudices shocked me. I realised that I had built up a picture in my mind of foreign teams as the enemy – because you always want your team to win. But I had then made the same assumptions about a whole country. It's true what they say – travel really does broaden the mind."

5 In pairs or small groups, discuss what you know about the following.

- ▶ 'Foreign' food
- ▶ International film or television
- ▶ Music from other countries
- ▶ The places where your clothes are made
- ▶ Celebrities from other countries
- ▶ The countries where your favorite international team or sports stars come from

Student's copy