

REFLECTING ON HIDDEN CULTURAL RULES - PART TWO

During last week's Teacher's Corner activity, students began to think critically about what defines culture. They also planned a skit based on the characteristics of an assigned culture group. This week, groups will perform their skits as others observe and try to identify characteristics of each culture group.

ACTIVITIES: SKIT PRESENTATIONS AND BRAINSTORMING

Time: Varies depending on the size of your class, but all groups will need to present skits, reflect on those they watch, and brainstorm a list of descriptors. Estimated time is 45-60 minutes.

Goals:

- To help students reflect on what defines culture and to understand that different cultural groups have rules and expectations that may not always be communicated directly.
- To listen, speak, read, and write about culture in English.

Materials: Culture Group Descriptions (Appendix A), Example Scenario (Appendix B), poster/chart paper, different color markers, student notebooks, pencils, student skits (written and brought in by students)

Preparation:

1. Copy the Skit Observation Table (shown in Procedure Step 3) on the board for student groups to use to record observations as they watch skits and discuss what they see. Students should copy the table into their notebooks before groups share their skits.
2. If you have a very large class, with multiple groups representing each culture, you may choose not to have every group perform their skit in front of the whole class. Instead, you can divide up the class (in half, or in multiple sections) and have each section watch the groups in their section. If you divide up the class, make sure that all of the culture groups (1-4) are represented in each section. Every student should make observations about all the culture groups.

ACTIVITY ONE: SKIT PRESENTATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

Procedure:

1. Begin by reviewing the purpose of the skits with students and answering any questions. Remind learners that the goal of the skit is to demonstrate the list of behaviors they made with their group based on their assigned Culture Group Description.
2. Tell students that they will have 10-15 minutes to practice their skits before performing them for others. If you are splitting your class in half or into sections as described under Preparation, share the plan with students.
3. Once the time allotted for practice has passed, draw students' attention to the Skit Observation Table. Explain that as students present their skit, they should share the number of the culture group they are representing. Members of the audience should record this number on the Skit Observation Table. As they watch the skit, students should also note what behaviors they observe, as shown below.

culture group	Behaviors Observed			
Number _____	Communication Style	Emotional Expression	Gestures or Body Language	Eye Contact or Physical Contact
	<i>People do not say what they are thinking</i>	<i>Not an honest display of emotions Negative feelings are hidden</i>	<i>Very few gestures Smiles that do not seem genuine</i>	<i>Avoid eye contact Shake hands at the end of the conversation</i>
Based on these behaviors, what do you believe to be some of the characteristics of this culture?				

4. Once students have had a chance to view all of the skits from each of the other culture groups, they should work together with their group members for about 15 minutes to compare notes,

discuss observations, and brainstorm ideas about characteristics of each culture. Characteristics should be recorded in the Skit Observation Table.

5. After groups have had sufficient time to discuss and record characteristics, bring the class back together. Tell students that they will now share ideas in order to attempt to create a description of each cultural group.
6. Label four sections of the board or four pieces of chart/poster paper with culture group 1, culture group 2, etc. Tell students that you will record the characteristics they share about each culture group and that they should also copy the information into their notebooks.
7. Remind students that this is just a learning experience and that no one assumes any student shares the behaviors or characteristics of the culture group they represented for the activity.
8. Beginning with Culture Group 1 on the board or chart/poster paper, have students volunteer to share characteristics that were observed during the skit. Continue with each culture group until a list of characteristics has been recorded for each one.

ACTIVITY TWO: DESCRIPTIVE BRAINSTORMING

Procedure:

1. Explain to students that now that a profile of each culture group has been established, the next step is to list words or phrases that describe each culture group. At this point, you can share the culture group Descriptions (Appendix A) either by photocopying, projecting, or having students read them aloud, to provide students with as much information as possible.
2. Divide the class into four large groups or, if you have a large class, create smaller sections and assign each one a culture group to focus on. Provide students with chart/poster paper and markers to record their list.
3. Tell students that they should carefully read the description and profile of their newly assigned culture group and think about positive and negative descriptions that may be used to describe the group. Inform the class that they will have 10 minutes to record as many positive and negative words as they can to describe the culture group they have been assigned. Have each group elect a recorder to write down student responses.
4. Provide ample time for groups to review the list of characteristics generated about their assigned cultural group during the first activity, as well as the original culture group Description.
5. Then, set a timer for 10 minutes and allow students to begin recording their one-word descriptions.

6. Move around the room and ensure that students are generating a list of positive and negative descriptors. If needed, prompt students to come up with additional words to describe each culture group by asking questions such as:
 - a. What are some positive aspects of this culture group? What do you think they would do well? What would people like about someone from this group?
 - b. What are some negative aspects of this culture group? What do you think they would not be very good at? What would people dislike about someone from this group?
7. Once time is up, have each group select one student to share what their group wrote down to describe the others. Give each group ample time to share their list.
8. After each group presents their list, have students recall the culture group to which they belonged during Activity 1. Ask students to read the list of descriptors generated for that culture group closely, and to reflect on the following questions in their notebooks:
 - a. What descriptors would you characterize as positive? Which ones are negative? Create a list for each.
 - b. Which of the positive descriptors do you agree with most? Which do you disagree with? Why?
 - c. Which of the negative descriptors do you agree with most? Which do you disagree with? Why?
 - d. Do you think this is a fair representation of the culture group you represented during the skit? Why or why not?
2. Ask students to find a partner that was assigned to a different culture group during Activity 1. Have partners share the reflections they recorded in their notebooks.
3. Once partners have had time to discuss reflections, ask students to volunteer to share their feelings about this experience and whether their culture group was described accurately or not. Encourage students to discuss the implications of this activity beyond the classroom.
4. After the activity is complete, collect all materials for use during upcoming classes.

Next week, students will continue to think critically about culture as they add to their initial ideas about what makes up culture on the Culture Thinking Map from Week 1. Students will also begin to discuss and reflect on how cultural differences can make intercultural communication challenging at times.