

## THINKING ABOUT INTERCULTURAL INTERACTIONS

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So far this month in the Teacher’s Corner, students have had a chance to adopt characteristics of a fictional culture group, plan and perform skits, and observe and describe culture groups other than those they were assigned. Through critical thinking, reflection, and discussion, these activities have helped students recognize that culture includes more than just food, clothing, and celebrations. This week, students will add ideas to the Culture Thinking Map and reflect on potential breakdowns in communication that could happen when people interact.

### PREPARATION

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**Time:** 30-45 minutes

**Goals:**

- To help students continue to reflect on what defines culture.
- To think about and discuss potential miscommunications or misunderstandings that could happen during intercultural interactions.
- To listen, speak, read, and write about culture in English.

**Materials:** culture group Descriptions (Appendix A), Example Scenario (Appendix B), Culture Thinking Map with students’ ideas about culture from Week 1, different color markers, chart/poster paper, student notebooks, pencils

**Preparation:**

1. Ensure that the Culture Thinking Map (Week 1) and descriptive lists (Week 2, Activity 2) are displayed in the classroom.
2. Gather copies of Culture Group Descriptions (Appendix A) and Example Scenario (Appendix B), or be sure you have a way to project them.

### ACTIVITY ONE: ADDING TO THE CULTURE THINKING MAP

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1. Display the Culture Thinking Map from Week 1. Start by asking students to review the ideas about culture they previously added to the map.
2. Next, have students get into groups of 3-4.

3. Remind students to consider how they thought critically about culture during the other activities. Ask them to discuss additional ideas they would now add to the map.
4. Allow groups to discuss for five minutes. Then, have students share their ideas. Using a different color of marker, add new ideas to the Culture Thinking Map.

## ACTIVITY TWO: REFLECTING ON INTERCULTURAL INTERACTIONS

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### Procedure:

1. Ask students to recall the number of the culture group they were assigned when they created and performed the skit. Have students hold up fingers to indicate which group they were a part of.
2. Tell students that for the next activity, they will need to create a new group of four students. Their new group should be made up of one member from each of the culture groups. It is OK if some groups have more than four members as long as each culture group is represented. Provide time for students to get into new groups.
3. Tell students that for the next activity, each of them will represent their assigned culture group. Students should approach the activity from their culture group's point of view.
4. Project or pass out the Culture Group Descriptions and remind students about the descriptive lists they created in Activity 2 during Week 2. Provide students a few minutes to review these items.
5. Explain to students that they will revisit the Example Scenario they used to plan their skits during Week 1. This time, students will participate in a discussion with classmates from each of the different culture groups and answer questions.
6. Display the following instructions for students to read:
  - a. Choose two culture groups. For each one, think about the description, the skit you observed, and the descriptive list. What do you think would happen if members of both of these culture groups were in this scenario? Would people from the different groups interact easily and get along well? Would the interaction be difficult, or would anyone get upset?
  - b. List areas where you think the interaction might go well and areas where you think communication could be difficult. In your answers, refer to your descriptions of the culture group's behaviors and characteristics.
  - c. Repeat Steps A and B for a different pair of culture groups.
7. After students read the instructions, answer any questions about the task.

8. Tell students to write down their responses in their notebooks. Provide students with at least 20 minutes to work in groups. As they do so, move around the room and observe.
9. When time is up, gather students' attention again. Ask learners to reflect on what they discussed and wrote down in their notebooks, thinking specifically about the reasons that intercultural interactions can be successful or challenging. Provide some examples by saying "For instance, in some cultures, direct eye contact is a sign of respect. However, in others, it is a sign of respect to *not* make eye contact. Or some cultures prefer to speak directly about issues when someone is upset, while others prefer to minimize feelings and maintain relationships. These differences could cause a misunderstanding."
10. Give students 5 minutes in groups to generate a few reasons that intercultural interactions might succeed or be a challenge. Let students know that they will share their ideas with the class to create a new thinking map.
11. Write the words "Factors that can affect intercultural interactions" in a circle in the center of a piece of chart paper or on the board. Have each group share the reasons they came up with and add them to the chart paper to create a new thinking map.
12. Once all groups have shared their ideas and all new ideas have been added to the map, explain to students that they will use this Intercultural Interactions Thinking Map during the next activity.

In next week's Teacher's Corner, students will bring together all of their ideas and reflections in order to think critically about how to successfully approach intercultural interactions.